

# AD ep 5 final transcript

**Claire Clotley:** This is American Dreamers. My name is Claire Clotley and every week together with Aurra Studios, we'll be sharing fascinating stories and conversations with black Brits or black Americans living at the American dream or aspiring to live the American dream outside of the US.

If you haven't heard the saying, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. I suggest you Google it because it will give you some context for this episode of American Dreamers speaking with global citizen, Joanne Griffith, an internationally renowned journalist, digital strategist, creative leader, and a self-confessed audiophile.

My kind of people will be hearing why she moved to the US when you already had a good thing going on in the UK. Welcome Joanne, how are you?

**Joanne Griffith:** Hi, Claire. So good. It's so good to actually finally kind of, you know, we've talked a few times, but actually kind of, although I guess this is radio, so you won't see it, but you know, you know what I mean?

This is the first time we're seeing each other.

So it's lovely. Lovely to be here. Thank you for having me on

**Claire Clotley:** You were well-established as a radio journalist in the UK. How did you get there?

**Joanne Griffith:** I had always wanted to like actually radio wasn't on my radar, or if I did any kind of journalism at all, I always wanted to do print.

I went through a phase for a while that I wanted to be a physiotherapist. Of course, when I was really young, I wanted to be an astronaut, still hold aspirations on the astronaut front. I'm not kind of letting that go, you know, Hey, you never know. JPL is down the street from where I live in California.

So you, you never know, but you know, when I was introduced to radio, I was like, oh yeah, this is, this is a hundred percent made. You know, it's all about telling stories. It's all about connecting with the audiences, all of those things. And so I worked my way up, like so many of us do, I did a post-graduate diploma in broadcast journalism at the University of Westminster, which actually

wasn't meant to happen, but finished university, I was working in the technical support department at Volkswagen in Milton Keens.

I went for lunch one day and I bought a copy of the voice newspaper. And in that, you know, you kind of flicked through and, you know, read the stories. And for some reason, I, I kind of got to the back of the newspaper and there was this ad for the broadcast journalism course at the university of Westminster.

So I went home and I said to my parents, I was like, um, so I got offered a place on this broadcast journalism, postgraduate thing. Can I have some money because I didn't have. And I am the child of immigrants. I was like, there's no way they're giving me 2,500 pounds to do this post-grad course. Like there's no way.

And my mom was like, yeah, sure. I've got to think and I'll get it for you. I was like, oh,

**Claire Clotney:** excuse me, mum. Did you just say what I said? 2,500?

**Joanne Griffith:** Oh no, I didn't. I didn't ask Christian, but she did make the point. She said, uh, by the way, I'm not giving this to you. This is a loan back. I was like, that's fair. That's fair.

So, yeah, so I, I finished my job at Volkswagen and I started at the university of Westminster on this post-grad course, a few days later, and it really opened the door. Truly to my career. You know, I used to volunteer on a weekend show called black mix, terrible name, great show. I did that for a while. And then it was like the 1997 election.

When Tony Blair. Became prime minister. And they'd asked me to come in and do some stuff there and, and it was a big deal. Cause I went from working on weekends to working on dayside or daytime, and then I kind of just stayed and worked on different shows. Um, it was, uh, you know, it was a news and talk station, so it was a lot of calling.

I did some reporting. I did producing princess Diana died. So I planned a lot of special coverage around that. And really that's where my career began. At the time

**Claire Clotney:** and arguably still now the BBC is a big deal. And you had your foot in the door, in fact, two feet underneath the desk, meaning that you were ahead of the game, especially for an ethnic minority journalist.

What would you say the culture and environment was like for black British journalists

**Joanne Griffith:** at the time, the contingent of black folks at the station all worked on that show on, on black mix, a grand total of three of us. So working on dayside. It was me. And then one of the news editors randomly her dad was my teacher at school by, they were from Sri Lanka.

So they were kind of, of Indian heritage. And that was it. And anyone who is a person of color or a child of. In the UK or even here in the U S no, this reframe, which is you've got to work twice as hard to get half as far. And I remember when I kind of got that opportunity to work on dayside, literally every day I went in and that was the refrain that was in my head because there was nobody else.

It was just me and my parents had always made a point of saying to me, like, speak properly. It's Newton, not Lou, Lou. Yeah. So there was real code switching. You know, I talk in my Luton accent when I was with my friends, but when I was at work, I was talking like this and making sure that every single letter was annunciated because a, I knew that I wasn't going to get a pass.

Like everybody else would. And also my mom and dad could hear. And I knew that I'd be in trouble as soon as you walk through the front door. Yeah. If I was not speaking properly, like, you know, and anyone who has parents from the Caribbean will. Our parents say all kinds of things in all kinds of ways. But the letter H is the one that everyone says, Hey, H and there used to be a store and batching them might still be called w H Smith.

And it was in the news for some reason. And I called it w H Smith. And I came out of the newspaper who was reading the news. And this producer was kind of like, That's wrong. It's H not Hage. And I remember feeling like so embarrassed and so like, oh my gosh, I have no business being on the radio when I don't need to know the difference between H and hate.

But you say what you hear. And that's what I would hear in my, in my household. So there was a lot of dealing with those kinds of things, not just at my first station, but many states. So whilst

**Claire Clotney:** you were experienced in that, you know, internally, externally, you look like you're living the dream. I mean, you're young, you've got a great job.

You've got great family support. You're building your life outside of the workplace. You know, you're, you're a homeowner. Things seem to be going well, would you say.

**Joanne Griffith:** I mean, I think I was very fortunate in my career and I still feel that way that sometimes doors are opened and I'm like, why, why is this door being opened for me?

Why am I getting these particular opportunities? I'm no different from anybody else. And yet these things would happen. A lot of it was hard work, but I'm a woman of faith. I call it God too, because I have no business doing some of the stuff that I've done. Like none. I ended up as a newscaster on five live.

You know, I used to listen to five live as a kid and there. Hosting the morning show or, you know, reading the news into Victoria Derbyshire or sitting next to Rod Sharp. You know, he was the guy who started up all night and I loved that show and there was me kind of sitting there reading his news. You know, I got to travel to Barbados to do stories.

I went to Malawi to travel, to do stories. Is this my life. Like, how am I this kid from Luton with parents, from Barbados getting to do all of this work and meaningful work and being an example to kind of other young black girls who might think, oh, wow, I want to work in, in journalism. Or I want to work in radio.

And I was kind of like, well, you can do it because I'm doing it. I was always grateful for those opportunities. But it made it even harder than when I made the decision to leave the UK, because it wasn't just about me. It was well, there aren't at the time, there weren't too many people like me who were reading the news on a national outlet every day.

And there's a weight and a responsibility that comes with. Before you decided

**Claire Clotney:** to move to the U S what were your assumptions about the U S and American people? And did they live up to, you know, your stereotypes or perceptions of America?

**Joanne Griffith:** Well, I actually studied American studies as part of my Undergrad.

So I did American studies and politics, and apart of that, I actually spent a semester in Arizona of all places. And so I think some of my preconceptions of America and what it was like, kind of got knocked into touch during that trip. You know, I remember saying to my. Oh, yeah, like I'm going to LA and they were like, LA is so violent.

There's guns and there's gangs and there's drugs. Don't talk to anybody. Don't dah, dah, dah, dah. And of course we all came and I was like, downtown LA, a whole group of us. Again, no business doing that. And it wasn't anything like that. We met really great people, so really great things. And I think for me, that was a trick that probably really peaked my interest in the U S I really saw possibility in a way that I didn't at home.

I saw a way that as a black woman, that. I have a different life, but I didn't have any idea of how I would do it. It felt like something I said, oh yeah, that, that would be really cool, but I didn't honestly ever think that it's something that would happen. I didn't have a plan for it. It kind of just happened.

**Claire Clotney:** So as a black woman, did you identify with what you thought it meant to be black in America and have those opportunities?

**Joanne Griffith:** It was not an easy transition, but there was a lot that I had in common with other black women, until you open your mouth, you're just a black woman. Sure. Right. And so there's everything that comes with that.

There's the assumptions about who you are, how you act, what your belief system might be, how angry you might be about any particular thing. Does all of those things, how you carry yourself, how you should wear your hair, all of those things. And so I definitely remember having a lot of conversations with my black male female friends about just what it meant to walk in this skin as a woman, you know how you are perceived walking into a room without saying a word.

How you have to kind of hold yourself and not be quick to anger because perception is everything, you know, so not even having anyone, even for a millisecond, believe that you're angry about something, because then you're the angry black woman. So it was that whole thing. And it was the same in the UK. You know, there were a lot of things that I was unhappy with in the workplace.

I remember at one station when. Yeah. I had a contract. The contract came to an end. I wasn't rehired. When other people who had started with me were hired. They did not look like me. And I remember kind of being really upset by that. And I had someone who at a time, I deemed a friend, you know, we're not friends now.

But this person pulled me aside and it was kind of like, you know, you have to not be so angry. Like don't be so angry and I'm like, what are you talking about? I don't have a job. And the reasons I don't have a job, a kind of both. And it was like, yeah, but you know, but, but you really can come across as really angry sometimes.

And to her credit, she thought that she was doing me a favor, but I was like, I was angry, her perception that I was angry. I'm like, I'm not angry. I'm just trying to do my job. I'm just trying to work. And you know, when I came out here, I had friends out here who'd experienced exactly the same thing. I will say, being out here in the U S I think my accent confuses people.

It's like a disarming technique, as soon as you open your mouth and they hear that you're British. They're so confused about who they thought you were before you opened up. And then you opened your mouth and now it's odd or cannot compute. And then it just shuts down. That

**Claire Clotney:** definitely resonates. You know, I've got dreadlocks and I'm a black woman.

And when I present, there are so many, you know, assumptions about who I am before I've even opened my mouth and they hear the British accent and. Physically see people relax and get warm and open and, you know, they haven't opened their arms, but I can see them wanting to give me a hug and tell me that life story.

And it's, it's, it's bizarre. And you know, I'm going to be honest. I'm going to use that to my advantage if I can, but it's not something. I'm accustomed to in the

**Joanne Griffith:** UK, I got out of a jaywalking ticket. I was out walking with my husband. This is when I first moved here. And you know, like you walk wherever you want in the UK.

No, one's really gonna say anything, but we J Watts. Cause we were trying to get somewhere as hot and just about to get to the other side of the road and we see this police car. And my husband quick as a flash and my husband is black. By the way, he was kind of like you do all the talking. I was like, w w what would, what would you mean?

He was like, you do the talking to the, where I find, so the offers kind of like, oh, excuse me, you realize that you were jaywalking and I let him talk. I didn't say anything. I let him talk. And then I. Oh, Mr. Officer. I'm so sorry. And I literally saw him kind of backed up like, oh, whoa, wait, hold on. That's not what I was expecting.

And I was like, oh, I'm so sorry. We're just here on vacation. I didn't realize, you know, in the UK we can walk across the road. And he was like, oh man, I'm so sorry. Well, just so that, you know, like, don't do it again, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I was like, oh, I'm so grateful. Thank you so much. And he said, you know, don't worry, have a good day, but just make sure you don't do it.

I was like, Thank you so much, never adjust anything to my husband, but my husband was like, if I had opened my mouth, as in him, he's a guarantee that we would have got ticket guaranteed. Sergio. And

**Claire Clotney:** your husband is

**Joanne Griffith:** a black American black American. Yeah. Hm.

**Claire Clotney:** Give me the real real, did you move for love or did you move for work?

**Joanne Griffith:** I am love under the auspices of work. It's funny, you know, when you were saying earlier on about the big deal, about working for the BBC and all the rest of it, I worked for the BBC for a decade when I'd moved out here and I was working at five live. It was a really lovely situation. I really enjoyed working there really great people.

So when I left and I let people know like, oh, Hey. I'm moving to the states. I literally had people who I had not seen for quite some time. They were like,



have you lost your entire mind? You moved to America? What, what are you doing? And I'm like, you know, I'm going to be freelancing. I'm going to be doing some stuff in the BBC.

I'm going to try my hand at doing some other things. And they were like, but you have a really good job. You're working at five live. Like th th this is it like your, your career goals. Why are you? And I'm like, you know, I don't see that I can actually move any further. I don't want to work in television. I really liked this guy.

So I'm going to go, I'm going to try out if it doesn't work, I'd still have my, my, my little flat I'll come back, but they had no people, people weren't having it. They were just like, She's lost it, but I've been here 14 years. So I guess it wasn't a bad decision after all.

**Claire Clotney:** Do you remember the process you went through to get

**Joanne Griffith:** to the U S so a full disclosure, like this is not what most people experience.

So I came out to the year. In May, 2007. And I met up with some folks at the BBC bureau. They were really great. They were like, well, you know, we always have work if you've ended up out here, come through. If we've got stuff. But the other thing I did while I was out here that time, I love to visit radio stations, wherever I go.

And I went to one called KPFA, which is part of the Pacifica network here in LA. And the person that I was meant to meet was actually out sick, but I don't know, I don't know why they weren't able to in contact me, but so I turned up and they were like, oh, you know, such and such isn't here, but actually you might want to go and have a look at the archives that are upstairs.

So I was like, okay, sure, no problem. So I went upstairs and they had the Pacifica radio archives, which is one of the oldest public radio collections in the us. Got talking to the folks there. And it's literally a vault full of tapes going back 60 actually probably almost like 70, 75 years at this point.

And in that meeting, I was like, I think I have an idea for a show, because I was like, I'd love to share all this material with, with folks in the UK. Like this is, this is amazing. And it's folks from the civil rights area and musicians and



artists, and like all kinds of sports personalities, all sorts. And so I talked with the folks at Pacifica about it and they were like, oh my gosh, we love that idea.

I went back to one of my colleagues at five life who was the editor of apple night. I think there could be this thing. And he was like, well, if you end up going we'll commission, like a 30 minute segment every week, you pick whatever you want to do, we'll pay a couple of quid for it or whatever. How's that sound?

I was like, that sounds good. And he was like, oh, and I'll do your visa for you because you'll be doing work. You'll be, you'll be doing work for the BBC. And then we can have you do. Other things. So I came, I actually came out of here on a journalism visa and I had that probably for about a year. Me and my husband, we got married and then I got my U S green card that way.

So my process is actually really straightforward and simple. So I knew I was coming out here with a job and I didn't have to worry about all of the immigration stuff, but I, again, a hundred percent recognize that's not usually how it happens for most people. I was very fortunate in that respect.

**Claire Clotney:** So when you arrived in the U S as an established woman from the UK, did you find the transition easy or were there any things that you found challenging that would have been easier for you in the UK?

**Joanne Griffith:** For granted, it's like, oh, I just have a phone. I've got my phone. I can do whatever. And coming out here, it was, I didn't have any credit. I was in my thirties when I came out here. So, you know, I'd bought a house, I'd done all kinds of stuff, but coming out here, it was like, I was 16 again, 18, again, everything I had was like literally the money that I had or kind of credit cards that I had, but I, I didn't exist in the states.

So having to build credit from scratch with the phone situation, like I had to get a pay as you go. Which was a nightmare. If I was doing stories and I had to file in the field. Because it would, it would charge you for every minute that you're talking or people called you, you will be charged for that as well.

So didn't love that. And so, yeah, and then just like reestablishing credit, finding a hairdresser. And it was, I remember I came out here like, you know, I was doing some, some television and it was a year that it was like the final Harry Potter book came out in the deathly Hallows and it was. Make thing out here

and I got a call from BB and they were like, oh, you know, would you be able to go and cover it for us?

I was like, yeah, of course. But I kind of remember looking at my head and being like, oh, oh way. Yes. So, you know, you get on Google and it's like, all right. And I have natural hair, you know, and it was really long back then. And I literally was wearing it kind of in cornrows and twists that I could get done down the street from my house in Tottenham for like 35.

No, no big deal came out here and I'm like, it's one of my assumptions, so, oh, well it's LA, there's a lot of black people here. There's a lot of black women here. There's Hollywood here. Oh, it's going to be really easy to get my hair done. Not so, so I found this one point. I made an appointment. I went, it was like an absolute horror show of getting my hair done.

And this was like a black hair salon that specialized in natural haircare. But I was like, okay, whatever, like, let me just get it done. And it's finished. And of course I hadn't asked about how much it costs because I'm like, It was 35 pounds back in the UK. Like it cannot be that expensive. So I get to the front and I was like, oh, how much?

And she said, I was \$200 and I looked at her and I was like, really,

**Claire Clotney:** do you think she exploited the fact that you were

**Joanne Griffith:** British and you had a British actor a hundred percent because there were no kind of pricing. Oh, but the reason I know that she was trying it on is that there were two people that worked on my hair, but the one, the guy who'd worked on my hair, he slipped me his number.

And he was like, when you need your hands done again, call me. And when he did it, it was 80. Which was probably still a little bit more than regular folk were paying, but I was like, okay. So that, that put me on my guard that not everyone welcomes the accent and that people, and it's just a very easy way for you to be targeted.

So suffice to say, I never went back there again. And I used that guy and paid the \$80. Very lovely. You

**Claire Clotney:** know, in terms of the cost of living and things, I'd always assumes that live in, in the us would be more affordable as you visit you think,

oh yeah, the pound, the Sterling is so strong. I'm going to get my money's worth.

And then you arrive here and I'm finding. Ooh, how much

**Joanne Griffith:** for an avocado? How much? Yeah, it's really expensive out here and you're right. I think his Brits were really spoiled when we're coming with our pounds. And like even when the exchange rate isn't great. You still feel like you're getting a little extra, a little something.

And, and I actually remember before my husband and I got married, he came to the UK to visit me. And this is in the days of like, when you would get like two us dollars to the pound. Which is great for us, but when you come back the other way, it's like, oh, I'm going to give you my \$2 and I'm going to get this one little coin.

And so it worked out that I dunno, a cup of tea was like \$4 or something. And he's like, this is outrageous. So I did, when I first came, I kind of felt like, oh, okay. I was still earning money in. Before, like everything was set up. I was like, oh, okay. So I'm good. But then when I started earning in dollars and we were planning a trip back to the UK, or yeah, you're just kind of living regular life and it's like the cost of like petrol was cheaper than.

But food wasn't, you know, kind of things that we take for granted, but we're definitely more, more expensive. I always thought that getting announced done in the U S was cheaper. Not really. It was not like, not at all. Like when, when I started living American life, I was like, man, this is just as expensive as the living back in the UK.

And then especially for somewhere like LA. You know, you're then getting into the cost of housing, which is on a power with all more expensive than London. You know, you get a bit more space for your money. That's one thing I regret. It's just like moving from one really expensive city to another really expensive C you know, it's just kind of like, oh, I didn't win there, but.

**Claire Clotney:** You have been here for 14, long years. 14 good years may ask or,

**Joanne Griffith:** yeah, for the most part, I think those first year. So I remember I moved here in 2007. The recession was 2008, 2009. And those years were

tough because you're in a new place. You're trying to establish yourself, you know, your reputation back home doesn't mean anything out here.

I really enjoyed freelancing, but there was a point where I was, I, I would really love to just have a job with some security, but that wasn't afforded to me. And it wasn't a race thing at all. Energy was just. No way was hiring or the places that, where it was more entry-level jobs. And so, you know, I really had to humble myself in that respect and kind of say, well, okay, this job at \$25 an hour is better than no job.

But I didn't mind that because in my mind, and I say this to anyone who's moving here, whether you're in, you know, in journalism at the table or whatever industry you're in the U S and the UK share a language, but our cultures are different and the work cultures even are different. And so. Taking, what you may feel are a couple of steps back actually really is beneficial to you in the end because you get some, learn a new system, kind of a much lower stakes, like how people speak, how to negotiate.

Well, I'd never negotiated for a salary in my life. And it's only in recent years that I was like, oh, I should, I should negotiate. Oh. Cause my American friends would be like, you didn't negotiate. And I'm like, no, well, you know, the salary was fine enough and they're like, girl, what's wrong with you, but we didn't do.

In the UK, it's kind of like, this is the salary. Here are the benefits. If you get any at all and kind of off you go. So I'm grateful that I had that time to kind of step back and learn a new public media system and a new way of doing things. So now I'm in a place where I'm able to take my years of experience here.

And my years of experience from the BBC and then folks kind of like, oh wow, like you've done a lot. And I was kind of joke. I feel like I speak two languages. I speak British and I speak American. And there's, there's real benefit in that.

**Claire Clotney:** Sure. I was going to disagree with you earlier when you said we share the same language, but we have different cultures, but you've just said that actually you speak American and you speak, you know, British in a sense, um, hobby and I we've been having some run-ins over.

Use of language like Q and line garage, garage trash. You had any of those nuances with your

**Joanne Griffith:** hobby at all?

**Claire Clotney:** Yeah,

**Joanne Griffith:** so I think one as you've very recently seen, not, not with hubby, but actually with some other American friends. So, you know, now the Bombay. It's back or whatever. And I remember the first time I heard that, oh my God, you're wearing a Friday.

And then used to be like, what's the problem? And I was like, okay. So in British it means this. And they were like, oh, oh,

**Claire Clotney:** oh, quick disclaimer. Funny. So I just

**Joanne Griffith:** call it a pouch just to, I dunno, is any better, but you know, just try and get around those things. But, you know, it's funny when you kind of talk about the hubby.

I think what's interesting is that the rules around dating and what it means to date as a Brit. And this may also just be like me and my really like tragic love life when I was back in the UK, but I didn't really date people there. Wasn't a lot of dating that went on. It was kind of either you were with someone or you weren't, whereas out here it's very much more, Hey, we're going to have coffee, let's have dinner.

Let's just maybe just kind of see where it goes and if it goes somewhere cool, but you can be dating multiple people. At one time and I'm kind of like this, I don't know any of my friends back in the UK that would tolerate that, but it's kind of just what you, what you do out here. So that, that's interesting.

Um, that's, that's almost like

**Claire Clotney:** another show because there are so many perceptions about black America, men who date black, British women. And, you know, I'd heard things about black American men from black American women. And that was definitely not my experience. My. You know, wonderful. Hence why I'm married now, but equally I think I've heard black American men speak very favorably about black American women.

So it was that wife swap kind of thing going

**Joanne Griffith:** on because like I asked my husband, I'm like, so kind of what was the attraction for you? I just thought that you were cool and you just thought differently, but he said, if you were exactly the same person you are, but American I'd feel the same way. You know?

So the Britishness doesn't really factor in as such, but my voice was the first thing that he noticed. Cause he was like, oh, okay. Like this is about one in front of me call. And he's like, oh, and you're British. And that, you know, kind of like started the conversation. So, you know, You've been here

**Claire Clotney:** while you're settled, but are there times where you feel very British in America?

**Joanne Griffith:** Yeah, I think so. I think, honestly, anytime I open my mouth in a group, you still sounding English mate, proper English in it, but it's like, you know, a lot of my friends, like my close friend here. It's British. I still hang out with British people. You know, I talked to my family a lot, so that I think that kind of, that keeps the accent fresh.

I tell you what I do find myself sometimes when, cause as soon as you do open your mouth and you say anything and people are like, oh my gosh, you're British. And there's that curiosity factor. And then everyone wants to talk to you. And sometimes I'm like, I don't, I don't want to talk to people. So I just won't say anything.

And so people will say to my husband, oh my gosh, your wife is so quiet. And he's like, no, she's not. She just doesn't want to talk to anybody today. Cause it's just, it's never a quick conversation. You're always going to get into. Well, why did you come and what do you do? And dah, dah, dah, and some days it's just kind of a, like, so you're from England, but where are you from from which is, that's a whole nother phone calls, you know, do you get

**Claire Clotney:** that here?

Because I haven't found that so much. I mean, if I meet a black American and they'll ask me, where are you from? And I'll say, The UK or London, and that will be enough. They won't ask any other questions. Whereas I, you know, I've said this before. I don't know any black British people full stop. They are black, British Beijing.

They are black, British garmi, and they are black, British something else. Whereas here, people are quite comfortable with saying I am black American. The beginning and the end. So I'm surprised that you're getting

**Joanne Griffith:** that here. I do. I do. And then I think partly, it may just be a consequence of where I am. Like, there's a lot of folks from Billy's here in LA and there's a lot of Jamaican folks, a lot of Trinidadians actually, I'm here in LA.

So I think sometimes there is just when they hear the accent, it's kind of like, oh, okay, you're British. But I think there is an understanding of, oh, Britain probably was not the first stop. If you, what. So then I'm kind of like, oh no, I'm from Barbados. And every hurricane season is then kind of like, oh, is your island okay?

No, no, no, no. That's Bahamas. No, no, no, no. That's Bermuda. Oh, okay. All the, all the bees kind of roll into one, but you know, I do think standing out. Has helped. And I do think that moving out here I think has made me a much stronger person. It's made me question a lot of things. You know, there was a lot of ways that I was treated better at work or dating or not dating.

Or at school where I just accepted a lot of things. It was kind of like, well, I should be grateful for what I have. I should be grateful that I get to do this work when really, it was kind of like, you know, I had no expectation that I could have more and moving out here just really made me realize your limitations are yourself.

What do you want to do with this? And also when you move out over fuel that all kind of circle of country, Not that you're, re-imagining who you are. You're not becoming a new person. Like you're always going to be the essence of who you are, but I think you are forced to examine what your boundaries are or just how far you can push yourself.

It just brings up all other kinds of questions that when you, when you have safety that perhaps you don't question, you just kind of do it. So how

**Claire Clotney:** would you describe. Cultural identity to others.

**Joanne Griffith:** Now I say that I'm a black, British Bayesian. Barbados is always, always that's the foundation of, of who I am like my ancestry, my home, but Britain is also a home.



That's where I grew up as where I was born. But then America is. So sometimes it's this, and especially with the pandemic, it's been this very soupy feeling of what does it mean to go home? Cause in my head and I just want to go home and it's kind of like, when you say that, what do, what do you mean? I think really what I mean is I want to go to where my family is and that's where they are.

They're in Barbados and they're in the UK, but I actually, I love the complexity of my identity because no one can put me in a box. No one can say, oh. That's how you Brits are. It's kind of like, yeah, but I'm from Baba and it's too though. Oh, that's how you buy it and sale. It's like, yeah, but I live in LA, you know, and no one can do that to you and my life just feels so much richer for being able to call all of these places.

**Claire Clotney:** That's amazing. Very inspiring. I'm going to ask you some really fast questions now. Yeah. Yeah. Let me in, what's your favorite UK meal versus your favorite meal in the states?

**Joanne Griffith:** I think it's gotta be fish and chips. No offense to any kind of fishing ship place that I've been to in the U S but it's, it's just not, it's not the same fish and chips in the UK with.

Hands down. Oh, wow. Yeah, I know. Right. Versus

**Claire Clotney:** have mushy peas on the side.

**Joanne Griffith:** No, no, no, no British then, but it tastes really good. Now, if it's favorite Caribbean meal, I

**Claire Clotney:** did not ask you that

**Joanne Griffith:** British meal, fish and chips, fish and chips. Pretzels. Are you for it? U S meal. I know you can get it in the UK, but sushi.

But I didn't eat sushi. Yeah. I didn't eat sushi until my first trip to the states when I was what, like 25 or whatever. And I feel like I've had sushi back in the UK and I'm like, nah, that's not it. It's not the same. No. Okay.

**Claire Clotney:** What comes in your suitcase with you when you're going to the UK? Or when you're coming back to

**Joanne Griffith:** the U S oh, going to the UK, it's usually a bunch of hair products for my sisters with stuff that they can't get in the UK.

And also trader Joe's almond, cranberry, and almond, cranberry, and whatever, but they're not. Mix sounds very posh. I'm like you, people can get these in the UK and my family, like, no, the trader Joe's mix is like, it's, it's the one, bring it like fine. What am I bringing back from the UK Jaffa cakes? No way.

And wine gums. Cause the important ones don't taste the same hair and PG tips.

**Claire Clotney:** Yes. Tea is a must. It's really strange that my husband hates tea and he can't stand the smell of it. And I brought back like a massive box of tea and he's double bagged. He's just like, I just can't take the smell. Best thing about living in.

The weather. What do you miss most about the UK? My family.

**Joanne Griffith:** Oh,

**Claire Clotney:** no, no, no. Not who

**Joanne Griffith:** I think, you know, like walking around London, why the architecture of London and the history, you can't beat it, like going into art galleries. Even this is gonna sound, we like, even the smell, there's something about kind of like the UK air. That's just like crisp and fresh and clean. Like even in the dirtiest of places, my missing wrapping up in a coat, wearing a scarf, putting on a hat and gloves and just like going outside, you can get that here.

**Claire Clotney:** Surely there's so many states to

**Joanne Griffith:** visit. Yeah. But on a day to day at home in LA, it's just, it's a bit gray today, but most days it's, it's. And it never gets cold enough to really wrap up. My husband actually used to make fun of me when like the first year I moved here in the July. And so it was like that first bottom.

So October, November, like I love blazers and jackets and I bought these blazers and jackets and scarves and it was October. So, and it was a cool day. And I was like, oh, okay. This is time to like, for me to bust out all my cool weather stuff. And I put it on when I signed my sweating. Cause it was just. And he was at, where do you think you are?

I don't want you, but it's October and it was cool this morning. He's like, you can give all of that stuff away. You're not going to wear it, but I still have a couple of UK issue jackets for when I go home. Just in case. Have

**Claire Clotney:** you ever considered moving back home? Yes. Random more. And is that still a consideration?

**Joanne Griffith:** Not a consideration anymore, but we talked about it really seriously when our son was born, it was really about, I realized how far I was away from my family. I also felt really sad knowing that my family wouldn't know my son, as well as I know my nieces and nephews. I was really sad, really sad about that.

And like, we have a good life here, you know, and we've just had to be really intentional of finding other ways to maintain that connection, especially with his grandparents. But that was when it was most intense, was that probably a year and a half after he was born.

**Claire Clotney:** So your son is, you know, what would you consider him?

Do you think your British influence has been heavy?

**Joanne Griffith:** It's funny when he was young. So I was home for a couple of years with him up until he was two. And he would say mummy and water, and that he would say things in a very British way. And he went to preschool and it was a wrap after about a week, I was like, can I ask a water?

And I'm like, water, would you like some water? And he was looking at me like chill out lady like this. This is how I speak. He understands that he has many. And that he has choices. Like when he's older, he knows like, if you want to go and live in England, you can, if you want to go and live in Barbados, she can, if you want to stay here, you can.

And I don't know, like I'm, I'm excited to kind of see how he will move in the world as a black American. Mine knowing that he has choices just by virtue of who his mom that's so hard,

**Claire Clotney:** or man, and definitely resonates with me. You're up to some really interesting things. Some things that you weren't able to share with me, but I want to know what can we expect to see from yourself in the coming months,

**Joanne Griffith:** years?

Yeah, actually, I'll be able to tell you this. So I just very recently took on a new role as a chief. So with APM studios. So I I'm heading up their content. Thank you. I'm heading up their content strategy and really thinking about like how we serve audiences, not just here in the us, but also overseas. How do we bring in different producers?

How do we tell different stories? And, you know, I know a big part of the draw for them was the experience that I've had elsewhere. Like, I don't just think of. The audience here. I don't just understand the audience in the us. I also understand what it means to be an audience member in the UK or in the Caribbean, or, you know, Through my friends who are from west Africa and east Africa.

So I really take being a global citizen seriously. And I really see that there's so much more that connects us than divides us. And I, I, you know, I, I feel again, like so fortunate that I'm able to take my good experiences and my not so great experiences. Yeah. And be able to not just make a mark in the UK, but also make a mark out here.

I got so excited

**Claire Clotney:** and I feel even more privileged to have connected with you. And I'm like, right. I need to know where to start when I get here. And I got it. So it

is you. And how

**Joanne Griffith:** can our listeners connect with you? Twitter is probably the best place. @globaljourno and G L O B A L J O U R N O global journo. Or you can also go to my website, Joanne griffith.net Griffith. No S on the end of Joanne griffith.net

**Claire Clotney:** It's been a pleasure speaking with you. And, you know, as I said, I'm delighted that you were one of the first people who I really had a heart to heart with.

Doing the whole crossover thing. And you've very much helped me set up. So thanks, Joanne.

**Joanne Griffith:** It's like, you know, I say this to everyone. Like if you have an inkling that you want to do something, do it, try it. Like if the pandemic has taught us, nothing is that life can be brief and short. Like make every moment count.

And if it feels intimidating to move to a new place, I ask people who have done it, listen to this podcast, you know, you'll get a lot of information here. Everything seems scary until you do it, and then you do it. And it's like, oh, that wasn't so bad. Okay. Now what we're going to do next live, live the adventure.

**Claire Clotney:** Amazing advice. Thank you so much Joanne

**Joanne Griffith:** You're so welcome

**Claire Clotney:** Amazing advice from Joanne Griffith, who shared some similarities between her experiences in the UK and U S some of her frustrations really hitting home for me personally. But for me, the key takeaway in Joanne's story was that she gave up what was seemingly good in the UK and ended up with even better in the U.S. A gentle reminder, perhaps that sometimes you just have to let go and trust that something better is around the corner, across the ocean plus growth

doesn't happen in your comfort zone and not always in your time zone. To share your experience or being black in the UK versus the US email us directly at [theamericandreamspodcasts@gmail.com](mailto:theamericandreamspodcasts@gmail.com) and please rate and review American dreamers on Apple Podcasts. It's the best way for people to find this podcast.

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