

# AD Sherane Walker

**Claire:** Hi, I'm Claire Clotey and I'm back this week with another episode of American Dreamers, which is an Aurra Studio's original production. I'm still attempting to find out whether the grass is green up in the UK or the U S through ongoing, insightful and honest conversations with black Brits, black Americans and their families with lived experiences in both places I'm asking them and you to decide whether life is better for black people in the U S or the UK.

My guest on this episode lives in Milton Keynes, hashtag not everyday London people and is a pharmaceutical project manager, diversity and inclusion advocate, mother wife, an ex-pat lifestyle blogger, who was. Over 30 countries. Welcome Sherane.

**Sherane:** Wow. Thank you. Thank you. What a nice introduction.

**Claire:** Well, what's real. Isn't it? You are busy. You clearly like doing lots of different things. Where

**Sherane:** does that come from? I, I feel like it's not visited by choice. It's just that I have a lot of things I'm passionate about and I don't know how. Prioritize or pick one. So just try to do them all. You have done

**Claire:** a lot and you have moved a bit whilst you've visited 30 different countries.

You've actually lived in different places. Tell me what.

**Sherane:** Yeah. So I was actually born and raised in Jamaica and I moved to the U S around 17 years old in the U S I lived in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia area. And then at some points I decided, Hey, why not move to the UK? Then I just picked up and moved to Brentwood, SX.

And then now I'm in Milson, Keens. Okay.

**Claire:** So do you remember what it was like when you arrived in the U S from Jamaica? Oh

**Sherane:** my God. It's so. We always visited the U S I became a us resident as a child, I think our own age of 10, but my parents still wanted me to get an education in Jamaica. And I guess they just weren't ready to move yet.

So we always visited. We had family to be honest as a child, I kind of knew I didn't want to move there. Yeah. There was something about Jamaica that I love nature, and I love the simplicity of living on an island. Going to the beach and going to open markets. And, you know, when we visited the U S it was always a bit more, maybe more commercialized.

So we'd more hang out into malls and everywhere you had to drive and you leave your community and you're immediately on a highway. And I just didn't. It just felt too busy. Yeah. As a child, I wasn't looking forward to switching from that leg simple lifestyle where I would walk everywhere and see my friends and just have that independence to just be outdoors all the time to move into America where you suddenly have to be dependent on parents and people to drive me around.

And yeah, so I wasn't looking forward to the move, but my parents decided it was time to go. So we had to get.

**Claire:** I know exactly what you're talking about. If there's one thing that I do miss about the UK is that freedom of movement on your own, that independence until I got a call the other day. And listen, let's talk about driving in a minute because that's a whole different story.

I was getting angsty about the fact that I couldn't just get out on my own. I had to wait for my husband to come home to drive me anywhere, or it was a new thing because there's hardly any regular buses or trains. Like there were no way-finding places. So whilst you say that you liked walking around in nature and stuff in, in Jamaica, in the us, there are so many different states.

Talk to me about the differences in the places that you've lived in New Jersey

**Sherane:** Philadelphia. Yeah. So, yeah. So I've found that even listening to your, um, the last guest you had on your podcast, and they talk about the different states on how some states are, you know, you can have different ranges. Our cities somewhere warm, somewhere hot, different climates, for some reason, moving to the U S.

Or I didn't really experience that you moved to New Jersey and you kind of just stay on that east coast and you just have that same climate and the same landscape, I guess, living on an island in Jamaica. That wasn't my experience. There are mountains and beaches, and every morning I would walk outside my

And go on a balcony and see like the blue mountains and the clouds above the mountains. I missed that in the U S like where we lived in New Jersey, it was just flat. It was suburbs. They remind me of Edward Scissorhands where every house looked the same, how you walk outside and it's just like the house next door to you.

It looks identical to yours and you're just trees and there's no mountains, no change off the lens. It was very different. And now living in the UK, I find that I get to experience those different landscapes. So I live in Mulsanne, Keens. I'm surrounded by green spaces right outside my bedroom window is a field with sheep and like cows and stuff on holidays.

We've been traveling throughout the UK, like going up to the peak district to the Cotswolds, have field. I'm on an island again, and I'm getting the experience of getting different landscape. And I that's one of the reasons why I love it here.

**Claire:** I'm laughing to myself here because I'm a Londoner through and through you that, yeah, I mean, mate, I mean, and when I think of Milton Kings, I mean, I had family that moved there maybe 30 years ago.

And for me, Milton Keens felt very much like that. Edward, Suzanne place, like everything the same. Yep. Roundabouts highways. It just didn't feel like the UK that I was familiar with. So it's interesting that for you, you don't see that in

**Sherane:** Milton Kings. No, because there's so, I mean, I really appreciate green space and there's so much of it.

There's that little rivers that you kind of walk along the embankment and see the little fields with sheep grazing. And maybe it's nice to me because it's novel. Cause I've only been living here for three years because it's so new down there. Oh, wow. This is amazing. And for you, you grew up here, so maybe you just took it for granted and Willa.

It's just another field. As

**Claire:** well, I suppose lots of British people do take for granted the fact that they've got all of this landscape around, then we kind of stay in your city, you know, like New Jersey people just get familiar, they get comfortable, they stick to the norm. That is something that you definitely don't do you, you obviously like to try new things.

I guess you do take things for granted when you're living in one

**Sherane:** place. I think so. Cause I feel like when I've asked black Londoners, I know that have you been to the peak district or cut soils? The answer is most likely, no, it amazes them because you live in this beautiful country, but you never really take advantage of it and go and see the sites.

But I guess you just take it for granted. I'm shorter, beautiful places in New Jersey. I don't know if any, because you know, you just live there. So you just, you go to work, you go to school, you go home. So you travel outside of where you're comfortable to explore.

**Claire:** Did you travel outside of the U S because whilst you say you, you moved to us as a child, you were there for some time, right?

**Sherane:** Yeah. So I guess I moved there at 17, so that's not really, I guess I wasn't that year. I felt very young at the time, growing up as a child, I loved to read and I've read books sets in different countries and I've always wanted to see the countries. And it just became something that like a burning desire.

I remember when I was younger, I read this book called Sphinx by Robin cook and it was set in Egypt. And after reading that book, Egypt became. Country on the list of countries that I wanted to visit. And I was fortunate enough to visit. I did a study abroad program there for spring break when I was in a university.

And that just ignited a travel bug after I did that, I just, I just wanted to see it all just to explore other cultures, other languages. Food. I've always believed that it's not right to die, where you were born and there's a whole world out there to explore. So just like Y box yourself into to just one place, just go see it all.

Did

**Claire:** America offer you that diversity in terms of meeting people from different places? Or do you find that you've got that more in the UK to

**Sherane:** America? Definitely. I found out once I moved there, a lot of my friends were from other countries. And for some reason we kind of. Met each other and just gravitated towards each other.

But I find that overall, a culture in America, like once you moved there from another country, there's kind of this expectation to assimilate and to become Americans. So almost immediately I lost my Jamaican accent and I started to speak more of an American accent. And you just start to just assimilate more into the American culture.

Funny enough, I moved to the UK and my Jamaican accent came back. Yeah, I can hear it. Yeah. A lot of people now sit as, so in the more Jamaican and American, and I feel like people that I've met here from other countries, they hold on more to where they're there from then becoming. British. So people are still like, I have a lot of friends who are from Nigeria and Ghana and they might have been born here and their families are from Nigeria and Ghana, but they're still have a strong sense of where their, their culture is.

And the food is still being prepared in a whole set of Nigeria and food and they still speak, there are different languages, whereas that wasn't my experience. Like people just assimilated quicker there.

**Claire:** I definitely found the same thing, but I do feel like there's a bit of a shift, you know, with all of these genealogy and trace and ancestry and stuff like that.

You know, my husband is African American, his parents African-American his grandparents. African-American his great-grandparents, you know, so he doesn't know culturally anywhere. You know, apart from what's revealed in his genealogy tests, but do you think that in general, black Americans just are really happy and comfortable with claiming being back American?

Or do you think that there is this desire now to try and find out where their ancestors ancestors

**Sherane:** are from? I see there's a movement, so I'm a part of, a lot of social media travel groups on Facebook, on Instagram. And I see where there is a movement where people are. Definitely trying to find out their ancestry, um, whether it's through the genealogy test or traveling to Africa and just seeing like what countries resonate with them.

But again, that's something recent when I moved to America, that was what, 1999. So the culture was. Different back then. I mean, I can't speak for African-Americans back then. Cause I think when I moved, I was just trying to survive and just figure out what to do in this big space. Yeah. So for me it was just, okay, now I have to be American.

So you've

**Claire:** touched on it already. Is it easier to be your authentic self in the UK?

**Sherane:** My experience me personally. Definitely. So my husband is Jamaican and British and a lot of our friends are Jamaican and I was surprised to come to London. I go to Brixton markets and say breadfruits and banana and Yammer and all those jokes.

I just, I have a closer connection to the UK being a Jamaican Denna due to the U S I mean, a lot of our streets in Jamaica, lots of our tones. A lot of our culture is heavily. By the UK and you see it here and it just, it feels more home to me here than the U S did. And I do feel like I can be more Jamaican here.

What

**Claire:** do you think the U S has given you, or gave you that maybe Jamaica didn't and maybe has given you an advantage in the UK

**Sherane:** resilient? Opportunity. That's one thing I say lacking in new in the UK is the opportunity for black people. So I didn't just move to America by myself. I got lots of my high school friends were all in moving around at the same time on good to.

The school there as well. And I see how they have climbed their career ladders, how they've progressed in their careers. I don't see that kind of progression here in the UK, across companies, our companies within my industry. I don't see a lot of black leadership, which I see in the U S in the education sector, HBCUs.

I don't sit at in the UK. So I feel like in America, what has America given me? I guess, a strong sense of pride in. Black and being a part of a community that's willing to fight and uplift each other. Whereas, um, here in the UK, yeah. Where we can be our authentic selves, but I don't feel like the community is, I guess, unified with everybody, be in Jamaica and here and Nigeria and Darragh and

ganja under like we're all little pockets of black people within the UK, but we're not.

Big one community.

**Claire:** I've always wondered about that because I held from Ghana. That's where my, my parents are from and my majority of my family. And I love to celebrate the differences in black communities in the UK. So my mom's best friend is Grenadian, one of my best friends to make, and you know, that everyone's from everywhere and I love the differences and I love that we can really celebrate that at the same time.

I think that maybe the separation can cause unnecessary challenges where we don't all work together, the way that we could or should, or I don't even know whether everyone has that desire. And that's just my observation. I might be speaking completely out of turn, but I do admire the way that when it comes to black issues, for the most part, there are small subculture.

You know, African-American people who are on the fringe and they're not trying to assimilate or be part of a wider black community. In fact, they want to hold their identity quite strong, but I think it's, it's admirable the way they come together. I've never really understood. Can you tell me about the sororities and stuff like that?

That it just doesn't make any sense to

**Sherane:** be? Oh gosh, I wish I could. So I was not involved in a sorority. I don't understand that culture. See, this is a thing like as much as I'm American, I feel that that's an African-American culture that I just, I never assimilated that much. I guess I can admire it. So like I said, they have this brotherhood and a sisterhood that they all come to it together collectively as a people that I don't see here in the

**Claire:** UK.

So I have a 10 year old daughter and I know that you're a mother yourself. Mytosis currently in the UK, but I really interested about your journey into motherhood.

**Sherane:** I'll start with why I moved to the UK. Um, so my husband was already living here when we met Lise. I met him when we were kids in Jamaica, actually.

Store to my best friend when we're growing up. And then I moved to the U S and he moved to England and the same friend that connected us a few years ago. And I came to visit once we started to date long distance, and then whirlwind romance got married and I moved over right before I moved over, though, I was diagnosed with endometrial.

And having had surgery, the doctor has said, you know, it might be difficult to conceive. So just keep us in mind as you're getting married that, you know, you should probably try to start having kids right away. I, when I came over, I discussed that with my doctors here and they immediately referred me to, I.

Which, which was shocking. I had looked into IVF in the us before I moved over, just to kind of get an idea of what the process involved and the costs it, of course it was expensive. So I moved over to the UK and a doctor said, yeah, you know, with your history of endometriosis, I will refer you to, um, a fertility specialist.

And I would recommend that you go straight to IVF and shock of my life. Once I saw the fertility specialist. I found out that IVF was free in the UK, which, you know, in America, when it comes to anything medical, medical, and free don't go together and not some sentence, right. Much less IVF. So we definitely, we took advantage of that and for people.

So I've actually talked about my IVF journey on my YouTube channel. And people came from me a comments, like, look, the NHS is not free. It's taxpayers on. Okay. So I work and we pay taxes and my husband pays taxes. So it's a benefits of citizens off the country and taxpayers that's, the service was here and we were able to conceive our child through IVF.

**Claire:** That's that's a marvelous thing. Um, it's a bit saddening though, that people came for you in that way, when they knew nothing about your journey or your contributions to the UK. You know, I just learned recently on a podcast since if you from Orlando. Thanks, Orlando. That. When you become a British citizen, you do pay an amount for health.

**Sherane:** Yes. It's not. Even when you become a citizen, when you apply sat, I think I did a spouse visa. And whenever you have to read new the visa, every, I

think I asked where we need a visa three times, two or three times. When every time you renew the visa, you have to pay like this lump sum towards healthcare.

And it was quite expensive. I think it was like 500 pounds in addition. Contributing to, to the NHS through my salary. So I pay my any tests and my taxes contributions, and then I pay another 500 pounds. So yes, it's not like I'm here taking advantage of what the government has to offer, like I'm paying into it.

But I think it's the way I. I put the information out there on YouTube. Like I was very much excited and I guess in admiration that there's this service available here in the UK to homes that I was just like, wow, healthcare here is free and IVF is free. And I probably should've said it's, it's free at a point of service.

Meaning when you go to the doctor, you don't have to pay a copay and you won't get a bill, but it's not free because you're obviously contributing towards it through Texas. Sure,

**Claire:** sure. Yeah. Tell me a little bit about how much it would have been in the us. Cause I know you did your research.

**Sherane:** Yeah. Oh gosh.

That was so many years ago. But what I do remember is that it's dependent on how much coverage you get through your insurance. So some insurance would pay like 50% off the cost. Some would pay up to 90%, but a lot of them are phone is, is common that, that pay for the procedure, but not for the medication.

And the medication alone can run up to \$8,000.

**Claire:** Wow. Yeah. And then of course there's the cost of actually having. You know, going through labor, having your baby,

**Sherane:** right? Yeah. Yeah. And even before you get there, so there is a procedure for IVF, there's a cost of medicine. And then there's also the cost of all the blood tests thing that's involved and ultrasounds that's involved.

So it's, it's, it can become quite expensive. And then yeah. To have a baby in the U S. I don't even know what that costs anymore, but I know that Derrick copays

involved and there's a bill at the end of the delivery service that you get in the mail after the baby's born. Right. That doesn't make any

**Claire:** sense to me.

That's

**Sherane:** unbelievable. And that's what blows my mind about at NHS that it's such a great service that I've had two surgeries IVF my pregnancy. It was very complicated. I ended up having a C-section and at the end of the day, I, I don't have a, I didn't have a bail. I had to see hematology after given births for other complications.

No bill, you have this

**Claire:** conversation ongoingly, you know, the differences between the health service in the UK and the U S a former, uh, guest also said, But that the hospitals are archaic. They're old school. They're not as nice lesson. What are you? It's

**Sherane:** not a perfect system. That's something I had to get used to when I moved here, to be honest, that was one of was one of the things that drove me.

So when I moved here, I registered with a GP and I wanted to make an appointment and she's like, okay, we'll send you an appointment in the mail. And I was just saying what? I don't have an appointment. So you literally call to make an appointment. And then they'll send you a letter with your appointment through the mail, through the actual snail mail and home leg.

It just blew my mind. I, I had to sit and wait for a weeks and weeks again, appointments in the mail and yeah, the hospitals, some of them, I mean, They can use a little bit, some modernization. When I gave birth, I had to stay in the hospital for seven days and I was on a ward with maybe 22 other women. So it's not like in the us where you get your own room and it's like this nice hotels style hospital groom.

No, you're on a ward and you have to share this giant room with okay. Maybe 10 other worlds. But at the end of the day, you might not have that luxury comforts, but you're getting quality healthcare and it's not breaking

**Claire:** the bank. Yeah. Yeah. I remember having a water birth and having to book this birth in suite well, in advance.

Right. But it was competitive. So whilst it was free, it was, if it's available, of course, if you're in the. Physical state to have a water birth. And I know of friends who really wanted a water birth and booked for it, but it was busy on the day and they couldn't get in. So their whole birth plan, their dream of entering motherhood was completely shifted because it was dictated to them and I'm thinking, well, if you're paying for it, you're going to know.

Of what you're going

**Sherane:** to get. So it's not that NHS is the only option here. You can get private health care. I have private insurance as well through my company, and I have gone to a private hospital. One of my surgery was through a private hospital here, but again, even through private, it's so much cheaper than anything I've had to pay for anything.

At the same level of quality in terms of your own room and nice services. Talk

**Claire:** about money and a little bit about the work that you do. So you work your day. Job is informed pharmaceuticals and it's an industry that's known for some deep. Pay packages. Is it an American company or a British

**Sherane:** company? Yes, I work for one of the top five big pharma.

It's an American company and I started my career with them in the U S so when I got married, I transferred me over to the UK. And through that, I got to see what the range of salaries from project management is in. Versus a UK. And I actually wrote, let

**Claire:** me find it. I'm ready to learn. I've got my pen and paper ready, come on.

**Sherane:** So actually Google to get some information, I'm kind of compared it to other competitors in our industry. So in the us, the average salary for pharmaceutical project management is between nine to 3000 and 123,000 per year. Wow. In the UK. That's four to 5,000 per year. No way. That's average. Yeah. So that was something that was shocking to me when I moved over to to think, because I mean, I always thought of England of somewhere having, um, higher cost of living.

We know real estate here is way more expensive than some of the places I'm used to in the U S taxes are probably a little bit more as well. So I would think that the salaries would kind of. Match that higher cost of living, but it's not the case.

**Claire:** How has that impacted your lifestyle? Because that was one of the considerations that my husband and I had when we were doing this pros and cons and you know, where are we going to live?

If we'd move it to the UK and London prices, what you were getting on real estate or property. Th there was no comparison. You know, what you would get for two bed flat in London was a four bedroom house where I am in Henderson, Nevada. And I was like the math isn't really adding up. And then you've got to look for a job that you know, where you don't have a large commute because travel, whilst we can get around is not cheap.

**Sherane:** Yeah, exactly. I mean, for me, thankfully, my company transferred my oversight. I didn't have to deal with too much of a shift in salary, but in terms of like buying a house, I think that's why a lot of people move outside of London. So. Things were much more expensive than where we are now in Milton Keynes.

Thankfully, we're able to move over because of my husband's job. I don't know how, but somehow it all equals out. In terms of how much your salary is versus your living expenses. I feel like I live very comfortable here still as I wouldn't in the U S the only thing I have to sacrifice on, I think is space.

So the house is expensive, but it's small. You have to struggle with trying to find space for all your things. I think that's the biggest sacrifice, not having the kind of property that, that, that, that, that you say you'd be used to in the U S so you just have to change your lifestyle. Don't shop as much, right?

I think there's a culture in America to just shop, shop, shop. I mean, you watch TV. Constants advertisements camo. There's a sale here to sale at Macy's shop, shop, shop spending money. Yeah, I mean, I lived there for however many years. I did and I accumulated a lot of stuff. And when I moved here, the day I moved here, I had eight suitcases, eight suitcases that doesn't include all the things I brought over on previous trips.

So I'd come over to visit and I'd bring stuff over and I'd bring stuff over. And the day I moved over, It suitcases check-in suitcases, how much that costs me. And

there were all over quick. And I just, I just had so much, so many things that I couldn't understand, or I couldn't grasp the concept of just leaving them behind all these shoes and clothes.

Oh my God. It was just, it was too much, but there's just this mindset. Culture of just accumulates and the best of the best of you watch a TV infomercial, and you feel that you have to buy it at product, and then once you have it, you just don't want to let go of it. So it gets backed into one of my eight bags and it made it way over to the UK.

And then there's nowhere to put it. Because we live in a two bedroom flat in Brentwood, which fortunately had closets like proper closets, not walk-in closets because I'm yet to see a walk-in closet in the UK. So it has, it had a closet, but there was just nowhere to store stuff. And at that point you realize you just have to let go of it.

And gradually over the course of the next couple of years, I just lost that connection to things as I started to have, I guess, more experiences with traveling. And it's just, I guess it's the culture here. You just don't have that connection with things. And that need to just constantly

**Claire:** shop on the other day we were going out and I didn't have anything to wear.

And. Especially after COVID I wasn't going anywhere and being in a long distance relationship, but, you know, again, it was more about buy in flights and it was buying clothes. So I saved my money in that way. But one thing I did really feel in my chest was not being able to go down the road to my sister's house.

I've got two sisters, all three of us are same size shoes and we can wear each other's clothes. And I burst into tears. I said,

**Sherane:** I just want to be able to go to my sister's house and pick up some

**Claire:** clothes and stuff. And I think that's how we got around it. Not having so much stuff I was sharing and I don't know.

The us has that community of sharers in the

**Sherane:** same way. So I have two sisters as well, and I find that we were very possessive or things and we never shared, and I'll use the site girly, like world war two because somebody borrowed somewhat as shoes. Okay. So we

**Claire:** assume a little bit different.

I

**Sherane:** love that. I love that.

I mean, but now when I go home, I'm like packing half my stuff to give them because I don't need it anymore. Yeah. I don't need all this stuff. You just learn to be content with life. You don't need stuff and labels. Oh my God. I used to be addicted to labels and it's ironic because now I live close to Vista village and I go there all the time and I have access to all the labels to the Burberry and offending.

It just doesn't have that same appeal anymore. And I don't know if that, is that living abroad or is, is that growth because, um, I'm now a mom or something. I don't know. But something changed. Yeah. I'm with you. Well, how did you end up in, in the U S if you had an option for your husband to come here, how did you end up there?

**Claire:** We really thought about where would we live in the UK? I love London. I love the diversity. I love the fact that I got my family friends around. I love the transport. I never fought. I'd say that I loved British transport until I got here and realized how important it is. And then we just started looking at the jobs market and my husband works in a very specific industry.

He works in power and power generation. And again, we did that comparison, that salary comparison. And we were like, whoa, that's like a 50%. Reduction and fundamentally we'd have to move anyway. There was no way we could live where I was living. We would have to move on the outskirts. And when I looked at where I would be moving to, I love Bristol.

Bristol is probably, you know, it was the top of the list for me. But Bristol was far from my family and friends whilst I have a small community of friends in Bristol. I thought. W w why, why are we doing this? We're forced in England. And as you said earlier, you know, why die in the place you were born in?

There's so many places to explore last Vegas entertainment game. And I was thinking for my daughter, she's into art. She's into gay men. Tech in America is just phenomenal. I could see her climbing up the ladder if she was to pursue that kind of career over here. You know that it was just so free range in lots of things to do lots of people coming in and out.

And I don't know, you know, maybe in five years, 10 years I might go, maybe I haven't made the right decision, but I was looking forward to getting off the small

**Sherane:** island. I know. And I spoke before and I said, it's almost like our experiences are kind of like mirror each other. So I've felt that way in New Jersey, like everything had to be planned and everything, everything was just too busy and I needed to get away from that.

And I've found that peace here in the UK. Maybe if I live in London, I wouldn't feel that way. Maybe I would still feel busy and confined, but because I live out in Milton Keynes across from a field, I feel like I do have. That that's our quality of life where I can just reset at the end of the day or can reset on the weekends.

And I don't. Too busy all the time, which I always felt in the U S I'm I'm constantly going back and forth. Like whether or not I should move back. I have a son and living in Milton Keynes, one of the downsides of a field light, like he was in nursery and he was the only black boy in his nursery. And I felt like I didn't want to do that to him.

I want him to grow up around diversity and I never want for him to be the only black child in his playgroup. So that's one of the reasons why I thought, you know what I mean? Go back to the U S so that he can be our own black people and, you know, yeah. Just to have family, just to bear on family. Cause it's, it's, it's difficult being in a country by yourself and not having grandparents and aunties and uncles and cousins.

Yeah. So that's one of the reasons to us thinking I've been here eight years. Maybe it's time to pick up. And move on. We've definitely

**Claire:** got parallels because, you know, as I said, my daughter's in the UK and a lot of her family are there. She's got family here and they're dotted around the

place, but for me, it's like an opportunity and adventure to explore, to go to different places.

I definitely want her to feel like the world is hers. And I didn't feel that in the UK whilst, you know, we had the privilege of being able to travel with our maroon passport, which is now black apparently, or Navy blue. I don't know. I still got the old school one. I think there's a confidence that comes with being associated to America.

And I don't know whether it's the resilience that you build or the freedom to be black. And be part of blackness that is succeeding elsewhere. But yeah, I don't know if she was, if my daughter was. Boy or, you know, if I had a son, would my consideration be different? I don't know. Whereas I don't think I had to think about so many layers with her being a girl.

I think when I see all the news and you know, reports about the way that black men are treated in America, it is worrying. So in a UK, I would never have to worry about my partner, go in and leaving the house. It just wouldn't cross my mind, but I found the minute I got here, I was really worried for my husband's safety.

I'd be like drive safely. Oh. Or if, if he has a little bit of attitude or whatever, I'm like, no, no, come on temper that tone because you don't know who you're going to run into.

**Sherane:** And that's the thing here too. And that's the thing about moving back. Like, I feel like I have to bring him back so he can be with family and kind of build his pride as a black man.

But the minute he becomes a teenager, then I need to get him out to safety. So somewhere that. Um, but I wanted to touch on something you said about travel. So one of the things I love about living here and something that I want to expose my son to, which is a reason why I would consider staying is the travel.

So living in the UK, Been to almost everywhere in, in, in, in Europe, because before the pandemic, obviously it was so cheap to just go to Italy and France and wherever. So is that something you did with your daughter that you would miss out on now living in the U S

**Claire:** well, I don't know whether I'd miss out on, but my daughter is, you know, very fortunate in the fact she's been to so many places and I definitely took advantage of it while she was younger.

So when. Too, by the age of two, she'd been to Ghana like twice. Yeah. I just thought, right. Taxes are cheap to travel with an infant. Let's go, let's do this, let's do this. She's got a list of places that she wants to visit in America. The first place she wants to go to is Hawaii. And I'm like, yes, I'm now in a position to be able to take it to Hawaii or Mexico.

You know, she loves Barbados. She loves Jamaica. We're close to the Caribbean so she can revisit those places. And of course the, a bit more of America. So I don't know. We have a, she would miss out because that's something that you and I share in common, a passion

**Sherane:** for travel. Yeah. That's a good perspective.

So, yeah, so I felt like I have to stay here so that we could travel Europe, but you're right. And when you live in an America, you couldn't travel the Caribbean. I could go home to Jamaica more often and visit the other islands. Yeah, you're right. Yeah. I haven't thought about it that way. People always ask, is it better as a black person to live in the us or the UK?

I have no idea. I think. The best thing for a black person to do is to just get up and travel, go live somewhere else, go have an experience somewhere else. Don't resign yourself to stay in that box where, where, where you were born or where you are, where you grew up. Just have a different experience, whether that's the U S the UK, somewhere in Europe, somewhere in Africa.

I think it's key to just get out there and travel and see what your experience is are can be as a black person somewhere. And when are you

**Claire:** coming back to America?

**Sherane:** What's holding you back. Hello? Really holding you back back here. I just, I'm at peace here. I'm at peace, Sarah. I mean, I think if I find. The right place to live in the us where I can feel the freedoms. I have hair, like for instance, I've been living here eight years and I have never been pulled over by the police here.

And I live with maybe three streets stone from the police station. I don't even think I can call on one hand. How many times I've seen a police car. Three years. I feel safe here. Have you been

**Claire:** pulled over by the police

**Sherane:** in the us girl? I've been arrested in the us. I have been arrested. I've been arrested for calling the police in the us.

I was in a situation where I felt unsafe and I called the police for help and they just, they came in and they just arrested. Everyone included me who was hiding in a corner and crying, and I got handcuffed. Put in the back of a police car, taken to the police station, fingerprinted everything. And I'm like, hello, I called you for help.

That was around maybe a few months after I'd moved from Jamaica to the U S I didn't even know anything about the police situation in the U S you know, I just knew that if you need help, you call the police. And that's what I did. And it turned out to be a very traumatizing experience. I

**Claire:** can imagine. I mean, I got pulled over by the police in the UK and it's so true.

I didn't feel scared. I was a bit confused. Like, why are you pulling me over? I think they pulled me over because I had my music really loud and I was driving a pretty decent car. And I was, I had this bright blonde hair and I was jamming. I was jamming, but my engagement with them was. Polite. Um, they were just like, do you know why we pulled you over?

I was like, no, I don't. Um, they were like, oh we, well, we ran your plates and your mot is out. And I, I, I was a little bit shocked because I was thinking, why did you feel the need to run my plates? Did I look like someone who'd stolen this car? I don't know. I think that's the thing that I find in the UK.

You always second guessing your experience with people who aren't black.

**Sherane:** Do you feel that the police do they, do you find them to be intimidating, like where they're trying to intimidate you and make you feel unsafe or unwelcomed

**Claire:** in that experience? No, but if I go back to when I was around your age, when you had your experience with the police, my first role counter, um, I was an adolescent.

I was coming back from college with my friends and we were all wearing matching tracksuits cause. That's just what you did when you were a teenager, you know, everything was like, you wanted to feel part of a group. So we were all wearing these matching added ass suits with the free stripes down the legs.

And we had a heads-up because it was cold and it was dusk. It was, you know, it was early evening and two police cars pulled up and stopped us and told us to remove our hoodies and told us where we go and where we're coming from. And I had a friend who had older. Family members who'd have experienced with the police.

So she had a hostile attitude straight away. Like you can't ask me, don't touch me. I was like, oh my gosh, what is going on right about now? And then they try to justify the reason for the stop by saying that there was an initial. Nearby and we matched the description. I was so stunned and confused as to what was going on.

I didn't understand what was happening in the end. They let us go. And my friend was furious and I was angry because she was at. But I didn't, I didn't really comprehend what had happened, but the fact is we were a group of black, young people walking with our heads up. So we therefore looked suspicious.

**Sherane:** Yeah, I've gotten that a lot in the U S so, um, the one experience I've had of being pulled over, I wasn't driving. My husband's an engineer and he had taken home. I forgot what they call them a concept car or something, but the car doesn't look like a normal car. Like it has all kinds of wires coming out of it.

It looks suspicious. It looks like a drive involved. And I just knew where we were in Brentwood. I just knew the minute we left the host that we were going to get stopped and we got stopped and being from the U S and having. Experiences with the police when they stop you, it's so much more intimidating.

Like you, you don't even feel furious or angry, you feel afraid. So I immediately kind of felt afraid like, oh my God, or what's about to happen. But there were so polite and they came over and he said, um, they call him, sir, which I've never heard. I've never heard in the us that us or. Mr. Oh, they were just polite and I was just in shock, like how different, I guess the experience was between here

and in the U S but yeah, I mean, I think as a black person, irrespective of where you are, you're always going to have that second thought.

Is this happening to me

**Claire:** because I'm black, unless you're in a black, predominantly black country, because certain things never crossed my mind when I'm in Jamaica or Trinidad or, you know, Ghana or wherever. I just, they just don't cross my mind or whatsoever. And I do miss that experience.

**Sherane:** Yeah, that's true.

That's true. But then you get stopped in Jamaica and it's just like, oh, is it because. You're trying to get my money because they think of money because I'm from foreign. Yeah. You can win. Right. It comes to the

**Claire:** please, if you can't win, we're winning, but you can't win at the same time, you know? Yeah. So tell me, what's a must have in your suitcase when you're coming from the U S to the UK,

**Sherane:** what do you find?

Band there's loads. Alfredo sauce.

**Claire:** Oh, that's the best of your salad dressing, right?

**Sherane:** No, no, no, that's the sauce, but I haven't been able to find it here and I'm in the U S we have really fine spaghetti call angel hair, and I haven't been able to find it. I love pasta back in the day, you know what I used to take back makeup, hair products.

I couldn't find hair products for black hair and makeup to match my complex shine. But that was because I was looking in Brentwood. I'm not in London. So when I went home, yeah. I used to bring stuff that out back, but yeah, and I can't think of anything else. So,

**Claire:** what do you take to the U S from the UK and your suitcase?

**Sherane:** Chocolates? My sisters love the chocolates here. Yeah. Chocolate

**Claire:** is so much better. I keep telling people this, they don't believe me. Like my husband thinks that Hershey's chocolate is the way forward. I'm like, you don't know about Cadbury's flake. It's the

**Sherane:** camera's is better. Yeah. So everybody want chocolates when I go home and.

Auntie. Yeah,

**Claire:** that's becoming universal. I think everyone loves.

**Sherane:** Yeah. Yeah. So my mom's marks and Spencers, for some reason, Jamaican Americans love anything from marks and Spencers.

**Claire:** They do. If it's not Harrods, it's smart.

**Sherane:** Suspenses even my husband's family. They want like knickers from marks and Spencer.

**Claire:** That's so funny. My mom's coming next week. Cause she asked me, what do you want? And I said, can you get me a pack of MNS knickers?

**Sherane:** The difference. Is there something, this,

**Claire:** there is a massive difference in the knickers, which are called panties over here. There's something about panties that just sounds a little bit seedy to me. Knickers sounds lady like, and there is a difference. So I bought some knickers and I, I guess you can't really compare Tajai to.

M and S but everyone goes to Saugus. I thought, hideous, sorry, target. But he D I wouldn't even wear them on my lady's time. I'm just like, no, thanks. No, thank you. They're diabolical. So knickers are on their way to me, and I'm very happy about. Well, I've enjoyed our conversation and I feel like we have to stay connected because we are living parallel lives.

And I'd love to hear how you're getting on and, you know, talk about other people who were interested in our story, how to

**Sherane:** connect with you. So I, um, during a pandemic, I finally started the blog. I should have started when I first moved here. So I have a blog and a YouTube channel under Girl Not Afraid.

And the blog has grown up afraid.com and I'm also on. Instagram under the same girl, not afraid.

**Claire:** Amazing Sherane. It's been a pleasure. Thank you for your time and your

**Sherane:** story. Cute

**Claire:** things. Knickers

take cash,

**Sherane:** right. Thank you.

**Claire:** A good way to sum up this conversation with Shereen Walker is that my spirit recognizes her journey. And so much of what she shared her sense of worldly wonder and commitment to personal discovery is deep. It's really got me pondering on the meaning of black identity worldwide.

And whilst she didn't have an answer as to where the grass is greener for black people, she did remind me of the global possibilities and potential for black people. If they dare to try, I mean, feel the fear and do it anyway. Right. Go check out girl, not afraid.com to share your experience of being black in the UK.

Versus the us. Email us directly at [Americandreamerspodcast@gmail.com](mailto:Americandreamerspodcast@gmail.com) and please rate and review American Dreamers on Apple Podcasts. It's the best way for people to find this. Thanks to Aurra Studios, our assistant producer, Brianna Jovan and editor David Deveraux. Stay in touch with me on the socials throughout the week at Clare Clotney.