

## PART 2

## 2021 Year-in-Review

*Nekose's adventures as a digital nomad!**Dating in Guyana*

My philosophy was I didn't come to Guyana to sit in the house for four months. I was committed to hanging out as much and as safely as possible, for general excursions and for meeting the mens of the Caribbean. Sawida and I are both at the settling down age. Don't no body want to pay these bills all by themselves, so we had been discussing if we could be kept women for the right amount of keeping. Probably not, but we settled on the hopes of finding emotionally available men. I kept getting the impression folks may have thought we were lesbians, "you doing this with your *friend*." People love to find a box for your lifestyle that fits their own comfort zone, as [Sawida wrote about in her digital nomad debrief on LinkedIn](#). I let the Guyana family know we were both looking for potential future husbands and they could point us in the direction of the eligible bachelors! They had no recommendations and some of them where like when you find them, let me know!

I'm still exploring who all is out here, but y'all know how your sons do, you raised 'em—well maybe. If you are unfamiliar with your sons' antics, you know how some of your husbands do! In my boo thang search, I'm firmly in the **value added** category, which holds true for all of my relationships. My soul is generally happy, so I'm not looking for external happiness. Too many people have comfort zones steeped in despair and are unable to ever see any good in their situations. I'm good on all that. Dating made me realize how much I value a *peaceful presence* and someone who is *actually present* as a partner. Peace in general is awesome. There is no allure in you stressing me out, especially when I already have my own stressful tendencies! As the old adage goes, I can do bad all by myself. All I need is the positives to outweigh the negatives, I would like the positives to outweigh the neutrals too, and some mutual attraction! I do keep hope alive on the boo thang front.

Sawida and I decided it was time to meet the men of Guyana! We are both skilled at online dating. I can teach a course. I know all the safety protocols. For at least the first date, meet folks in public and don't go to anyone's house or have them come to your house. Getting yourself to the date location is the safest option. What if they have contraband you are unaware of and y'all get stopped by the cops? You going to jail too boo, especially if you Black! Tell someone you trust who are going out with just in case you end up missing or worse. If you feel comfortable enough to ride in the car, or go to that person's house, get their full name, license plates, address, or any identifier you need. Don't be afraid to ask to see state issued ID, license, or registration. Be transparent that you are sharing their info and at least one of your friends will indeed find you if necessary. Safety first! Finally, make it clear that you don't need these internets to troll for sex. I don't know a single woman who does and sometimes you need to remind folks that you got options.

Since you never know who's gonna be an axe murderer or a scammer, you got to feel folks out *and trust your gut*, online and even when meeting people in person. We created Tinder profiles (Tinder is global) and agreed to do double dates. No one was going to be sitting home alone. Bring a friend was our original dating mantra. The men introduced us to different things to explore—restaurants we didn't know about, exotic meats like laba (a large tropical rodent) and various attractions. Three of the men I met came through on the double date front and after our pact was over, I had some individual dates. I met some nice men, but alas I did not make a lasting love connection in Guyana. I still keep in touch with folks though!

*Dating in Guyana*

## Dating Lessons

Dating in Guyana made me realize two things: 1) Men are the best tour guides. They know where to go, they know everyone, and they often had cars—entertainment and transportation rolled into one. 2) I'm at that special age where the 50 and over crowd and the 30 somethings are equally interested. I fall between both age groups; young enough not to be your mama and old enough not to be your child, however y'all could be father and son independent of me. I should call this the sandwich age 'cause that's what it is! Dating abroad reiterated to me that men are men regardless of age, race, status, whatever—men are men. It's a lesson I re-learned when I came back to the States in October and diversified my dating pool.

What do I mean the men are the men? I was walking to Aunt Joyce's house one day and was so proud of myself because I thought I had successfully camouflaged the family backside. I had on my long, mom jean shorts and was wearing a long, oversized shirt. I was ready for a peaceful stroll in the breeze. Nope. More folks than usual were saying hello. This guy in a car was particularly persistent and drove alongside of me for several blocks. When I was like 'I'm good, thank you sir,' he was like, 'I'm a doctor and you never know when you're going to need a good doctor in your life.' I laughed so hard I gave Dr. John my Guyana cell number. That negro was a dud though. Dr. John assumed I was a baby, and he was accustomed to being the expert on everything. Y'all know I'm also the expert on everything and I don't need an M.D. or Ph.D. to be one! I's be reading! Too often, men assume women have no frame of reference for what they are talking about, instead of just asking.

I did find the Caribbean men I went out with tended to be a bit more communicative about their intentions than the men I dated in the States, and there were definitely geographic differences. In general conversation, I asked one of the men what he did the night before. His response, "My friend hit a cow in the road. Since I have a truck, he asked me to help him take the cow to the butcher so he could get some money to fix the car." I was like why was the butcher open late. He was like everyone knows everyone in the village. They went to the butcher's house and asked him to open the shop and take the cow. Then I got a picture of a dead cow in the road. After I got the pic, he was like I'm sorry you're probably not used to seeing that. I was not!

In another conversation, I got a video of a caiman being trapped. The caiman had moved into the trench in front of his house, but they eat small mammals. Children and tiny dogs are in the small mammal category, so the caiman needed to be caught. This was the same man that kept telling me I could catch the geckos in my house if I made a little lasso "like we did when we were kids" and threw the lasso around the geckos' neck. I never made tiny lassos as I child. I have never made a lassos period! I still don't see how anyone can catch those fast moving geckos! What happened to the caiman? It was not taken to the wildlife preserve. People eat them too. It was sold to become meat and maybe even some shoes. Waste not, want not in Guyana.



*Joy's Birthday*

One of the men Sawida went out with finally dredged up a double date by the time Joy came into town. He really shouldn't have. I learned to believe men when they say seriously, I don't know anyone who would be suitable for your friend. We were celebrating Joy's birthday and Sawida's friend joined us for dinner. His friend showed up super late, after we had already finished eating, and still ordered a full meal even though we were ready to go, and the kitchen was trying to close. He was the most irritating man I have ever met, a contrarian for no discernable reason who thought he was amusing. Prior to his arrival, we were having a great time (look at those happy faces) and had planned to go to a second location, like we were youngins! Joy and Sawida were skilled in the art of ignoring a negro and I'm like this dude is working all my nerves. I was ready to chop him in the throat. That's the general downside of not having your own car. Rolling out whenever you want is just not an option and men on the street stay offering you a ride. This is why I need a peaceful man. I'm going to have to tell the full version of this story when I finally write, *Were you on your medication when you proposed to me?*

**Jewelry Gate, the not stolen jewelry**

When I opened one of my suitcases in Guyana, I found an empty Chanel perfume box inside. I can easily count the number of times I have purchased, or been given, actual perfume (not body sprays). None of it was Chanel. The landlord mentioned that it was not uncommon for items to go missing from people's luggage. Sawida's suitcase was unzipped upon our arrival, she thought someone went through it as it had been fully zipped when it was dropped off with United Airlines. TSA usually leaves a note when they rifle through your panties and there were no notes. The empty box really bothered me, and my Spidey senses were up. At first, I didn't think anything was taken but then I remembered my small Ziploc bag of jewelry.



Not my Chanel

When I was moving out of my apartment, I packed all of my jewelry in a large travel jewelry carrier. I was only planning on taking a few pieces to Guyana and needed to decide which ones. I stayed at Lara and John's house for the few days in between leaving my apartment and leaving the country. The jewelry carrier went with me, as did other items I needed to take to my storage unit. I meticulously chose my travel jewelry pieces, put them in sachet bags, then placed those bags into a sandwich sized Ziploc bag. I remembered setting aside the travel jewelry before my last run to the storage unit a day or so before my departure. The day I left Lara's, had been long and busy. I had to make sure my suitcases were not overweight, load them into my car, swoop up Sawida from her house, then head to my sister's house in Hanover. We were spending the night there because she was taking us to BWI early in the morning.

The Ziploc bag was not in the checked bag I thought it should be in; it wasn't in any of my bags. I kept checking. There was no jewelry. I was bereft. I didn't even wear a pair of earrings on the plane because when I sleep, they poke me hard behind my ears. With my low haircut, I love me some earrings. Most importantly however, my favorite pieces were in that bag, and many had sentimental value. The empty Chanel box convinced me I was burgled. I told everybody, their mama, and their cousin too. I spoke to friends and family, the owners at Pandama, the taxi guys. I spoke to the airline and the airport workers. I even asked the baggage handlers who would have my stolen jewelry and where I should look in Georgetown. I went back to the airport and filed a police report; the investigation said the cameras didn't pick up anything. I even put in a claim with the airline and wrote a handwritten note to the main airport official, during one of my many trips to pick up friends. All of Guyana knew that my mostly gold jewelry, received from various family members in Guyana, throughout the years, was gone and in its place was an empty perfume box that didn't even belong to me. I did the most.

As I'm lamenting the loss of my jewelry, other people started sharing stories. The Pandama owners had some medication taken out of their bag, Aunt Joyce knew family members that had things stolen, and Lester told me about a smuggling ring, from years ago, that was using airport workers to traffic drugs between Guyana and the U.S. They would insert drugs in a bag, unbeknownst to the bag's owner, then retrieve the drugs before the bag was collected. That process didn't always go as planned. Some well-respected military person was found with a large volume of drugs inside his bag. The network was uncovered when they determined the military person was not a smuggler.

Everyone associated with the airline said, 'How do you know your stuff wasn't taken in Miami.' I said I have traveled the world, and this is the first time I have ever found trash in my suitcase! Other folks were like, 'Why didn't you put your jewelry in your carryon bag and why wasn't your suitcase locked?' I was busy and stressed before leaving and I didn't even know TSA approved locks were a thing before this happened. **Y'all I had to apologize to all of Guyana. My jewelry was not stolen.** I accidentally packed it with the items I took to my storage unit before I left. I found the Ziploc in June when I came back to get vaccinated.

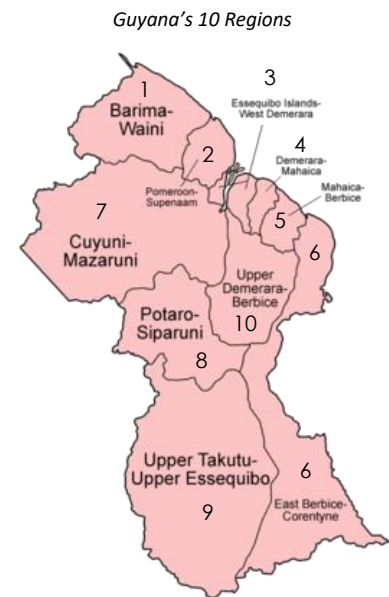


My apology to my countrymen

## Guyana Visitors & Excursions

We had so many visitors in Guyana! Folks were excited to join us for a little bit of our nomad journey. Joy came in March, then my dad in April, and Lara in mid-May. Haleema came at the end of May and Tonia in June, during my very last week in country. Sawida left the same day Haleema came in and Lara and Haleema would have had some overlap, but the airlines kept shifting flight schedules. With all of these visitors, I had to be strategic about my time off from work. I wish I had three weeks of PTO to use in a row, and still had some left to use for my August birthday, but I didn't! I maximized weekends and holidays and many adventures and shenanigans were afoot!

One of my goals was to visit all ten of Guyana's regions. I was told most Guyanese haven't been to all of them and surmised that was related to the large swaths of rainforest lands. When I asked Rawle what I could do in the bush, his response was, "get malaria." Rawle had jokes. Our favorite taxi man made about eight airport trips, collecting and dropping folks off, including a in February when I thought my jewelry was stolen out of my suitcase (Jewelry Gate). Between our visitors, family, and hanging out with the locals, I made it to eight regions! Regions one and eight are still on the list.



With or without visitors, Sawida and I saw a lot of Guyana during these coronavirus times! [We took a bunch of pictures too.](#) Most of our outings were around Region 4, which includes Georgetown, Victoria, Enmore, Cove and John, Pandama, Melanie, Campbellville, Buxton, Ogle, Plasaince, the Rumvelts, etc. We also branched out. In Linden, Region 10, we went to Aunt Eileen and Uncle Vics's house, which has a beautiful garden, their apparel store and their actual garden / farm land. Also in Linden, we saw the Christianburg Waterwheel and the Blue Lakes. They look pretty but are full of chemicals. Sawida and I took the ferry from Parika and went to the Anna Regina region for Lake Mainstay, Lake Capoey, and Hot & Cold Lake in Region 2. The roads around that area were very bumpy because of constant amounts of rainfall. Visiting Guyana made me truly understand the necessity of 4-wheel drive vehicles that sit up high! [Check out the photos.](#)

## Pandama



*Lara & me in the Pandama waters*

Our very first excursion was just Sawida and me. Her birthday is right before Valentine's day, so we were in country for barely a week when we started exploring! Sawida picked a retreat and winery called [Pandama](#) and we paid Rawle to escort us. Pandama is owned by a Black Guyanese man, Warren, who learned how to make wine during his childhood from his grandfather. He lived in the U.S. for a number of years and married a Black American woman, Tracy, who is an artist in her soul. After raising their children, they moved back to Guyana bought some land off the beaten path, built a house on it, and started Pandama. The food was a delicious American-Guyanese fusion, and the wine selection was vast.

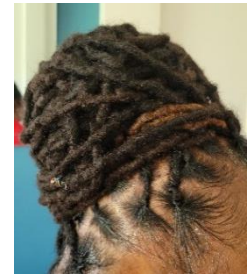
Pandama was my introduction to the medicinal black waters of the region. I earnestly didn't know water could be black and still clean before going back home. The whole region is full of Coca-Cola colored water. The color comes from the nutrients and sediment the earth deposits. Black people, black water, black truly is beautiful and incredibly powerful. We were going to spend two nights at Pandama but in case y'all haven't figured it out, we not really campers. I'm more of a glamper. I would go back to Wadi Rum in Jordan any day; that's my type of camping! The showers and toilets at Pandama were

communal and it was *dark* at night. Trying to pee in the middle of the night, in the forest, with a flashlight, and mosquitos eying our behinds wasn't our cup of tea. We enjoyed Pandama in the daylight and decided it could be our chillaxing day trip spot with visitors.

### **Lara and Tonia Come to Town (Separately)**

Each visitor had their own requirements. Joy was there for her birthday and wanted to have a relaxing and fun tropical adventure. Daddy was there for property business and would do whatever else I roped him into. Haleema is an adventurer and wanted to see all the things in all the places. Lara was like "I'm from Africa, I'm not interested in the bush. I'm not getting on any small planes, and I'm not too keen on certain boats!" For her visit we went to Pandama and the bougie spa in Georgetown, which I vetted before her arrival to ensure it would be up to her standards. The spa had European service prices and did an excellent job. Those Indian peoples have not met a hair they could not remove (or bleach) as a standard part of any service, including a pedicure! Lara and I also checked out the neighborhood casino and had a late night walk back to Peter Rose. Waiting on a cab would have taken much longer than walking the 15-minutes. It was lovely inside the casino, but sketchy outside. My gut was like nope, too many people hanging around out here. It's two of y'all, just walk! A midnight stroll was the most adventurous thing Lara, and I did!

Tonia was trying to see as much as possible in a week, but time frame was not ideal. Between my packing to leave the country and general closures in Guyana, her options were limited. A number of small businesses closed during rainy season in June or were in their own break periods. Activities were already limited due to pandemic related closures or curfews. I told her I was going to be busy, but she was still welcome. One of her friends had family in Guyana and that friend's cousin was awesome. Kevin was the epitome of hospitality. He was the airport taxi, tour guide, beef squasher, and the additional jeweler connector! He was available for Tonia and took good care of her. Shout out to Fern who was also a tour guide and took Tonia out while I was working, and big ups to Shondell for that awesome hairdo. Her locs looked really nice. During her visit, we both had clothes made at Veronika's Closet and acquired new jewelry from Kevin's connection.



*Tonia's hairdo*

### **Arrowpoint with Joy**

We went to [Arrowpoint Nature Resort](#) the day after Joy's birthday dinner. Arrowpoint, Region 3, was the main attraction. The Arrowpoint people suggested Joy stay at the hotel they owned in Georgetown. It was the pick-up point for the bus that would take us to the dock, so we could get the boat that would take us to the resort. Joy was looking for some b-day hotel luxury but got rustic charm instead! In hindsight we should have known the nature resort hotel wasn't going to be posh! You should have seen our faces when we first arrived to drop off her luggage! We couldn't even tell there was a hotel and were seriously flummoxed. 'Where are we?,' we asked one another. Then we kept asking the taxi driver (not Rawle) if he was sure he was at the right place. We were. Joy's room was musty when we walked in and needed to be aired it out, much like our apartment. That hotel was another example of how the right angles in a photo can make anything look spectacular! Joy found the area where they took their most magnificent website pictures and then we got it!

Joining us at the pickup spot was one of the resort workers and a family with two mom friends, two children around five years old (a boy and a girl) and two teenage girls. The dock was 45-minutes to an hour from Georgetown. We arrived at the dock and waited for our boat, which was driven by another resort staff person. Arrowpoint is literally in the jungle and only accessible by boat or small plane. Everything was serene, even the speedboat ride getting there. We were in a different world. The calmness of the water, the jaunt down the river, and encountering a number of indigenous communities that navigate the water ways to connect with one another was all a completely new kind of experience. If it wasn't corona times, we would have been able to visit another village.



*Arrowpoint Adventurers*

Our cabins were cute and had bathrooms! A bat really liked Joy's bathroom and would just hang out in there all day. We came up with a backstory that the bat had a fight with his family and the bathroom was his quite time or away spot. The trees surrounded the property were full of bats and other creatures. Joy decided to let the bat have the bathroom, they weren't sharing space. The resort people removed the bat, he came back, and they removed him again. He really liked that space. Sawida and I had a tarantula in our bathroom. I had just taken off my clothes to get in the shower and saw the spider chillin' on the opposite side from the water stream. At first I was going to ignore the arachnid, but then I was like, do I potentially want to die naked in the shower at Arrowpoint because I erroneously assumed a spider wasn't harmful? I put my clothes back on and got the staff! The spider wasn't going to kill us, but if it had bitten us, it would have really hurt, and

we would have had an allergic reaction. We know this because that type of spider had bitten Sharon, the lady who managed the site, on a previous occasion and she had some intense, painful swelling.

We had a great time at Arrowpoint. It was a true disconnection from the world. None of us had cell signal and the resort internet was not for general use. Sharon was like you not here to be on a device, rest yourself plus this wifi is for operations and emergencies! We hung out on the hammocks, went kayaking, got in the water, did a nature hike, and had a bonfire. There were more activities, but it was raining off and on. We took a nap and decided against mountain biking in the rain. Kayaking was a whole mess!! We are city people. I tried to go canoeing in high school and the other two people in the boat told me I was messing up their rhythm and wouldn't let me row! I got in the kayak with the tour guide, Derek. Someone would need to save me if I fell out the boat in my life vest.

I also did a night hike in the jungle, with Derek and the two young ladies. Sawida and Joy were like we're good, but those young ladies and I were ready for the adventure! One of the girls was my hero. She was so athletic—good at kayaking, playing volleyball, and swimming! She made me wish I had played more growing up, dammit parents! Derek regaled us with a story about how a cougar followed him from one of the villages when he was coming back to Arrowpoint on one a jungle path he helped cut down to connect the villages. He grew up in the bush and knew various cougar deterrent techniques. Hence, he was still alive to tell the tale. After that story the girls and I were good; we didn't need to walk any further into the jungle. 'Let's head on back to our cabins' was the consensus!

### **Daddy's visit includes Kaieteur Falls**

Let me tell you about y'all's father. Daddy stayed at Aunt Joyce's house in Georgetown and tried to walk to Peter Rose Street for a visit one day. He grew up in Guyana and usually stays with Aunt Joyce when he comes to town, but there are sometimes very long years in between his visits. He really thought he knew how to get around, like stuff doesn't change. Also, street name signs do not exist on every corner, which makes navigation even more difficult. Dick gave Sawida and me very detailed instructions on how to walk to Aunt Joyce. We wondered why it was heavy on landmarks and light on street names until we started walking! We still got turned around. Daddy was lost. He didn't get a local SIM card and was dependent on his T-Mobile working when he wasn't near a home phone, which was a crapshoot.

I had to put on my sneakers and find him. Luckily, the call connected, and I was able to track down the street he was on. He kept moving about thinking he could find me no matter how many times I said, 'Daddy stay



*If daddy had a uterus,  
I would have come out of it!*

where you are, I'll find you'. I told y'all I have my own stressful tenancies. When I can't reach people, I get very worried. I don't care if you are a full grown adult! I'm going to racked with fear thinking you are in a gutter somewhere until we connect. Y'all's dad is stubborn. After his visit, this man was still trying to walk back to Aunt Joyce's house like he didn't get loss for an hour. I called a cab to take him back, as I had offered to do when he told me he was going to walk over in the first place. This time, I did not let him decline the offer.

Other adventures with Daddy included a tour of his property / land and a lovely dinner at Mrs. Adibisi's house. Older folks like chatting with older folks. That was a good time and y'all know I love a good meal. Daddy, Aunt Eileen, Uncle Vic, Fern, Sawida, and I had a wonderful excursion to Kaieteur Falls! Haleema and Tonia missed out on Kaieteur because the pandemic changed operations. Tours were only running on certain days and were contingent on if enough people signed up. This meant not knowing if you were actually confirmed for the trip until a day or two before. Weekends were the best chance of availability, but both of them only had one weekend in town, even if they were spending more than a week in Guyana. Daddy was in town for several weekends, so we made [Kaieteur Falls](#) happen!

Getting to the Falls definitely required a tiny plane. The plane lands at the welcome center and there is about a 15 -20 minute walk to get to the water. None of us had been before and it was worth every minute and every penny. Everyone on the tour was weighed beforehand because that's how small planes work, but not everyone got the memo to wear sneakers or hiking boots. The two older ladies who joined us were in older lady sandals and that was not recommended! The tour guides were especially vigilante with them. No hips would be breaking that day.

The aerial views, the plants, the history—it was all great. Plus, we got snacks to keep our energy up. We were supposed to get the snacks at the end, but after waiting in the airport for longer than expected, I was hungry. I was like can I get my snack before we walk to the Falls. Everyone else was hungry too and now wanted their snacks, so we had snack time first. As I type this I realize why folks always think I be the one starting stuff! I needed my energy to walk, I can't help that everyone else felt the same way and it only came to light because I advocate for myself! My words can't do Kaieteur Falls justice, please check out the [Guyana photo album](#). There is a concerted effort to keep the Falls pristine and we even took our trash back on the plane when we left! You will know when you get to the pictures of Kaieteur, <https://photos.app.goo.gl/W1MbGn1ka7wsAPry7>.



*The airport before Kaieteur Falls*

### **Shenanigans with Haleema**

Rawle was onto something about the bush. Although we didn't get malaria, Haleema and I got a story for the ages. When she was coming into town we were deciding what to do. I had not been to the [Rupununi](#) in Region 9 and told her it would be a new adventure for both of us. From talking to the locals, I gathered that the Rupununi is white folks' favorite ecotourism spot in Guyana, and it holds colonial significance. Think colonizers on the planes of Africa and how oppression is romanticized a la *Gone with the Wind*. White folks would come to Guyana to explore the Rupununi's savannahs, bird watch, and go on safaris. Guyanese people were trained to cater to them. These guides would be well-versed in all the things white folks cared about but couldn't necessarily tell you the species of bird in their own back yard. Imperialism at its finest. We started researching exactly where to go in the region, however the pandemic and temporary closures limited our options.

We chose Rock View Lodge. I connected with the owner, Colin, to plan a 2-night Memorial Day Weekend trip, We were to arrive on Friday and leave on Sunday. Getting to the Rupununi is an adventure in itself. The drive from Georgetown depends on road conditions, can be more than 10 hours long, and includes a ferry boat river crossing. The ferry is large enough to accommodate vehicles and only leaves a few times a day. The views on this drive are said to be spectacular, and worth the long car trip. I earnestly love the beauty of nature. Driving

one way and seeing nature was also cheaper than flying in both directions. Even flying wasn't straight forward. It involved a small plane and a 2-hour drive from the nearest airport, in Lethem, unless we were going to charter a plane to fly us directly to the Rock View property, which we were not!

We decided to fly into Lethem for the first leg of the trip and do the long drive back to Georgetown on Sunday. This would have given me plenty of R&R time on the 31<sup>st</sup>, the actual Memorial Day holiday. I would be well rested to remote work that week. While preparing for the trip, Aunt Joyce was like, 'That region floods a lot during this time of the year. The roads wash out. I wouldn't go.' Do two youngish adventures listen to a wise old lady that knows her country. Nope. We were like, 'We'll be fine Aunt Joyce.' As the security guard said to the gecko, 'sometimes you have to learn the hard way.'

### Believe the signs

Aunt Joyce's words were the first indication that this might literally be a bumpy trip. The second indication was that our original flight was sold out from under us. Seating capacity is limited on small planes and Guyana is old school, in many regards. They have had issues with people making credit card payments and disputing the charges, plus credit card fees are pricey. Booking a flight required an in-person visit to the small plane airport, similar to how I booked the Kaieteur Falls trip. Some carriers only accepted cash, while others accepted cash and credit. They charged a higher fee for credit card payments. These folks were not doing any payments over the phone or on these internets. They want to see you!

I reserved seats for Haleema and me to go to Lethem and had until a certain time on the next day to pay. I called the airline in the morning to let them know I would be arriving after the cut off time, but I was definitely coming with my payment. The woman I spoke to said that was fine. These people already sold the seats by the time we arrived. I was not happy with them and was ready to write them a strongly worded letter, but I never did. Do two youngish adventures say, 'Now we have gotten two signs from the universe, maybe we shouldn't make this trip?' Nope. Rawle helped us find another airline in the small plane airport, that by some miracle had availability, and we booked our flights.

We left Georgetown that Friday, arrived at the smallest airport I have ever seen, and waited for our ride. An old white dude and a Black lady show up in a car that is clearly her personal vehicle. Her stuff everywhere! It's Colin and his friend. We were supposed to be picked up in some sort of all-terrain vehicle, but it had broken down. Colin hitched a ride from a friend to swoop us up from the airport and take us into town. In retrospect, that was the third sign!

In town we are greeted by Alfred and his wife. They had prepared us a delicious lunch. It was so good. They own a big, all-purpose store and several other businesses in Guyana, mostly in that area of Region 9 but they also have some businesses in Georgetown. Alfred had a nice 4-wheel drive truck that was very comfy. We foolishly assumed he would be taking us all the way to Rock View. Our bags had been transferred from the car to his truck. After lunch and a small tour of Lethem, we stopped at a general store where we parted ways with Alfred.

### We're in it now

Because the original transport was down, our ride was now a minibus with local folks who were headed to the Annai region from Lethem. Annai's geography includes savannahs, mountains, and jungles. It is home to many different indigenous tribes. Talk about an ecosystem. Folks were headed home from work, or wherever, and some had their cargo in tow, like we had our suitcases. I was so confused when I saw Colin carrying about four dozen eggs and navigating the process to get our luggage on top of the bus with the driver. I was putting the pieces together in real time. You know how you look around like when is my ride getting here, then you realize that is your ride. We were already committed by then. All we could do was go with the flow.



The savannahs were beautiful and looked like the African safari videos on television. Giant anteaters are a vulnerable population and we saw two of them! I was very excited. The minibus stopped so we could get a closer look and I took some pictures! I'm sure impromptu safari stop wasn't standard for people who are just trying to go home, pretty sure they did us a solid. We also believe Colin paid extra to get the passenger seat in the minibus. I was wondering why the guy collecting the money and helping the driver load the cargo on top wasn't up front. All of our meals were included with the price of lodging, so those eggs riding with Colin were going to be breakfast. We had window seats in the row behind him. The region was very remote. It looked like people still had to walk a long way from the bus "stops" on the main road to get to their actual properties, back in the cut. I couldn't really see houses from the main road and with no signage, wasn't sure of the system for drop offs and pick-ups.



*Rupununi Savannahs*

By the time we arrived at Rock View the sun was setting. It was time to get settled in for our first night. I had already burned off lunch and was ready for dinner! Heavy rains started but the lodge gave us huge umbrellas. Haleema and I were the only outside visitors on the property. Everyone else either worked there and/or was related to Colin and his wife, Velda. Except for Colin and us, everyone else looked indigenous. At dinner, Velda greeted us warmly, offered us some libations, and let us know that dinner always begins when Colin arrives.

People be sharing and we learned so much about the family during our stay. We find out that this is Colin's third marriage and the way in which he acquired the Rock View lands. As a foreigner, he couldn't get land rights because the indigenous people don't believe in outsiders stealing their lands. Velda's father and Colin worked out the marriage arrangements. She wed Colin when she was 18 and he was about 20-25 years *older* than her. Colin had four children from two previous marriages, two girls and two boys. The two boys were in the same age group as Velda. His second wife was from Venezuela or Brazil and had passed away before he hitched his wagon to Velda, with whom he had two more sons. His daughters were happily living in Europe. People be sharing.

### *You don't really want to talk about race*

Colin kept steering the dinner conversations towards race relations. Don't talk race with me if you can't handle the truth. Actually, don't talk about anything with me if you don't want me to share my honest opinion! I have no desire to placate anybody. I don't believe in conversations where the sole purpose is white folks trying to convince you that *they* are not the problem, that *they* are good, and *you* need to see that. My perception of you is not the issue in race relations, how I conceptualize things is not the issue in race relations, my delivery of my feeling is not the problem, the real issue is white folks being more comfortable focusing on my *thinking* and my delivery than actually *fixing the problem*. Recently, I have had the same refrain—stop spending your time trying to convince me you are not racist, and instead talk to the white folks you believe are problematic. Don't try to beat me over the head with "not all white people." Spend that energy on telling your people not to be shit ass human beings. [I'm not the good negro](#), ain't nobody got time for that.

Colin pulled out all the stops, tears, anger, woe. Still, ain't nobody got time for that. Little did he know that when it comes to anything race related, white folks' tears don't phase me. White tears have been weaponized too much for me to care. I become Justin Timberlake (although he's not my favorite), *Cry me a River* is a catchy song. I was firmly in the 'them tears ain't changing reality so speak to your fellow white man and maybe there will be some progress' camp. Haleema was much gentler. Colin really like her! Although we share similar race relations feelings, she was like Nekose we are in the middle of nowhere with this white man, if ever there was a time for chill in your soul, this would be it. This is why me and Haleema are friends, she rarely raises her blood pressure over shenanigans, while I'm like did I take my blood pressure medicine today? I'm going to need it to deliver this lecture the way it should be done!

We had no internet or cell service, not on my Guyana phone (Digicel) or my American phone (Verizon) or Haleema's cell phone (T-Mobile). Even in making our arrangements, Colin could only connect depending on his satellite reception or if the internet was working. We had no access to the outside world. I don't go on vacation for race debates so I was like if he doesn't want to be upset, he should pick some new topics. I was also thinking, when your visitors are white do you earnestly engage in these conversations with them? Why is the onus on Black people to fix some shit white folks started and are still benefitting from? Are you saving these convos for the people who have the least amount of power to change structures, such as the one the allowed you to marry someone who could have been your child and gain this land? Sir, you don't want to have a **real** conversation with me.

Colin was looking for a therapist and wanted to unburden himself. He wanted to be absolved of his fears and guilt on what the racial future held for his brown grandkids, to understand why his kids with Velda weren't wholeheartedly vested in taking over and running the Lodge, and to talk about the toll the pandemic was taking on him and his business. He's old and the bright future he saw for his heirs was diminishing. The legacy he thought he was going to leave was in jeopardy. All of the shut downs and covid protocols were affecting his bottom line but we were there for vacation, not to be Oprah's cousins. Black women are still expected to be the emotional mules for everyone else. It's exhausting. If I know you and love you, okay, but other than that I have opted out. We got our own shit; your black ass guests are not here for your shit too. Find a therapist and talk to whatever Jesus you pray to about your life choices.

Furthermore, how was he not understanding the reason his wife and original sons would never be close is because they could be siblings! How was he not understanding that Velda is in this world trying to make sure her children have resources because your other kids never liked your decision to marry her. This is also why your sons with her don't really want to be involved in managing this property. When they get invested, their siblings, who are their mother's peers try to control things, even though they do not give the tours and care for the land. They don't want the stress and struggle that comes with fighting siblings or controlling parents. This is also why your two girls made a happy life in Europe away from all this. My therapist says I have a gift for analysis even if people aren't willing, ready, or able to receive it! That tracks back to my original statements, don't have a conversation with me if you don't want me to share my opinions. It took many years of my actual friends being like, Nekose I just want you to listen, no advice necessary, for that even to be a work in progress!

The youngest son, who is still a grown up in his 20s, showed us around the property. They have a lot of land. He also took us on a hike up a very large hill to see the sunset. We were huffing and puffing. It was a steep climb, even in our hiking boots. This man walked up there in flip flops! The mosquitos on the hill were tearing me up, even though I was wearing a ton of bug spray. I was out! We enjoyed the *beauty* of Rock View, the indigenous staff, Velda and her sons, and somebody's cute kids. The food was good, except for that pepperpot water they gave us on the last day. I told Haleema it was pepperpot cousin! I am Guyanese, if you do not have enough cassareep to make the pepperpot, make something else instead, and please don't tell me your pepperpot cousin is the real pepperpot!



Rock View Lodge Sign

Our tour guide regaled us with the history of the Lodge. Back in the day, Rock View was the shit. Chartered flights landed often, now they let other folks' cattle graze the landing strip areas. They used to have horses and livestock, not anymore. We did a horseback ride at an extra fee. Someone else came to the property with their horses, which looked like they needed some more feeding. The swimming pool used to be operational but was now defunct. The maintenance and upkeep costs are too much to handle.

The art collection was once pristine. Although the collection was still large and eclectic, it was tattered and had water damage. I could honestly see the former glory of Rock View Lodge and understood why Colin was sad about the decline. With no clear path for the future of a place you spent 30 years of your life building, I get it, but I'm still not your therapist though.

### Plans don't go as planned

Throughout our visit, the days had intermittent rain and the nights had torrential downpours. The morning of our departure was no different, it had been raining on and off. In Guyana, rain can start and stop, then the sun is out as bright as if it had never rained! The weather is like that. Colin commented that he hoped the roads were okay and said the region had been getting a lot of rain prior to our visit. He thought about telling us not to come because the road conditions get bad, but he did not. Really Colin, you thought about it but didn't say nothin'. You saying something would have been our third sign before ever leaving Georgetown. All I heard from him was, 'Can't wait to have you and Haleema.' In his minibus Vitor, his oldest son with Velda, drove us the 20-minutes down the mountain to the minibus pickup location. Vitor waited with us to make sure we were on the right bus heading back to Georgetown. It was still raining, the bus was late, and the bathrooms were disgusting. Thankfully they were cleaned before our departure.

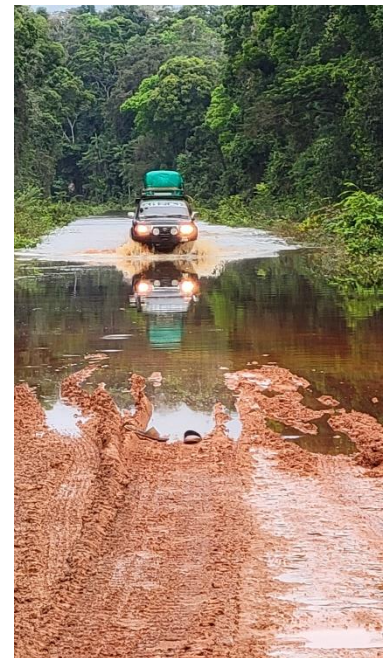
Haleem and I were crammed into an already full minibus that had nine people, including the driver, a baby and a small child. We made 11. Everybody on the minibus was Black or brown. I was in the last row between two women. Haleema was in the row before me by the window, on the side opposite the door. Haleema put her balled up jacket on her travel pillow and settled in. We drove about two hours, as the rain continued. We reached a flooded out road in the jungle and could not cross. Three other buses were stuck with us at the side of the road. No one had a snorkel for their vehicle and attempting to drive through would flood the engines. We were hoping the waters would recede, but they didn't. The drivers were hoping a big truck would come through to pull us all across, but the only trucks were coming from opposite direction. I saw a minibus with only two white people on the entire bus pulled by a truck, coming from the direction we wanted to go. None of those trucks were going to hitch us to them and turn back around to take us back to where they just came!

I was *amazed* by the good the spirits of the people. They were cracking jokes and using things in nature to mark how high the water was getting. It kept rising. It was way too stuffy in the minivans, most of us were out on the road talking and chilling. Haleema and I peed in the jungle. We found a nook to relieve our bladders and held up our jackets to cover one another, while hoping nothing bit us on the giblets. Minibus mom changed the baby's diaper and left it on the road. We were trashing up the jungle y'all, but the alternative was to smell poop indefinitely. I could not judge mom for leaving that diaper, but I did judge the driver for leaving his soda can. I have never seen people so jovial in the face of adversity. Their positivity really helped.

I wasn't feeling the best, I had some sniffles and congestion. It felt like I was getting a cold, even before the trip, and now I had been out in the elements for a while. One of the men from the other minibuses started smoking and it wafted in my direction. I started coughing up a lung. One of the men from my mini bus shook his finger at the smoker who realized his cigarette was why I was dying. The smoker put the cigarette out so quick and was so apologetic. Thanks goodness I bought all of allergy medicines with me, including inhalers and nasal sprays. When the smoker saw me connecting my spacer and taking a hit of my albuterol and then my Symbicort, he was worried! If I didn't have my supplies, I would have been coughing for a long time and making everyone uncomfortable in these covid times. Smoking kills y'all! We waited at the side of the road for about two hours and had to turn back.

### The brown people saved us

After we got back to our pick up spot, I knew I was not going to spend a third night at Rock View. Our best course of action was to get back to Lethem and hope Jesus had a flight we could take on Monday! I'm an



*Our flooded road in the Rupununi*

organizer in my spirit so at the rest stop I'm talking to my minibus mates like, if we get a ride back to Lethem, anyone want to join us? They were like what's your plan, and I'm like we hoping to find a flight on Monday. The young lady I was sitting next to was like I don't understand why y'all would have even chosen this bus if flying was an option. It was our adventurous spirit Ms. Lady! The man who saved me from the smoker let me use his cell. He had a dual SIM cell phone that had a GTT and a Digicel chip. GTT works in the bush, Digicel is good for the city. I'm really good at people collecting and had gotten several numbers during this journey. We called Vitor and told him we would pay him to take us to Lethem in his minibus. He was down and had very reasonable prices considering the situation.

While this was going on, I was like we need to reach out to Alfred. He had invited us to come visit his horses when we came back to Lethem and had even asked us about taking the plane back to Georgetown on Monday, instead of driving. When we got in our personal minibus, I used our driver's phone to tell Alfred what was happening. It was late and Alfred couldn't reach anyone at the hotel they owned in Lethem, but the hotel his wife's relative owned had availability. Alfred also reached out to one of his old employees who was connected to the airline. On a Sunday night, we got booked on a flight leaving on Monday morning and could pay when we showed up at the airport. It was miraculous how things came together. Alfred is my homie *for life*. The roads on the way back to Lethem were terrible too. There were deep craters and holes filled with water to navigate around. By this time, I was exhausted and fell asleep in the back seat. Haleema stayed up chatting with Vitor and learning that his goal is to be in business for himself and maybe own a minibus enterprise.

We finally get to the hotel around midnight. It's clear that this is a no frills hotel with bare bones amenities. For instance, no one was at the front desk, security was waiting to let us inside. All I wanted to do was take a long hot shower. My hiking boots were caked with mud, and I was dirty. I'm not a fan of being dirty. Haleema was like I'm good, she washes up a little, got that same jacket and travel pillow and laid on top of her sheet! I get in the shower and I'm like, Haleema I think the hot water in our room is broken. It's not coming out. She was dubious that hot water existed but I'm like no, this is a whole hotel how they not gonna have hot water. It's almost 1:00 am and I'm looking for hotel staff. I find the owner in the kitchen area and she's like no, we don't have hot water. Covid had taken its toll on that business too. She did give me a rag so I could try to clean off my hiking boots. I called it a day and got in the bed.

In the morning I took a cold shower, one body part at a time. The only way for me to take a cold shower is by doing the hokey pokey. Left arm, right foot, eventually you get clean. It's a shower I suppose, just slower and very cold! We didn't have enough cash on us to actually pay Vitor and told him he we would need an ATM. He had family in Lethem, so he dropped us off at the hotel and told us he would come back in the morning to drive us to the ATM. The ATM was less than 5-minutes' drive down the road. We didn't even realize it was so close we could have walked! We were so grateful to him for driving us, Vitor got a good tip. We ate our free breakfast that came with lodging, then Alfred showed up and took us to the tiny Lethem airport.

### SYBD – Adventure done!

Although a passport was not necessary to get to Lethem on the small plane flight, a passport was necessary to leave Lethem! Even though we were already in Guyana and flying to another city in Guyana, Lethem's proximity to the Brazilian border made folks strict about passports. People used to freely go back and forth across the border, but COVID got everyone extra edgy. They weren't going to be responsible for someone coming across the border then hoping on a plane to the most populated city. I was so glad I had my passport on me. It was miraculous how everything turned out. I could have kissed the ground when we landed in Georgetown.



*Haleema & Nekose  
Happy to be back in Georgetown!*

We kept in touch with Vitor, I had pictures from our visit I promised I would send. The minibus people had to wait two or three days for the water to recede! Each day they would make the drive to check the road and would have to turn back. I definitely didn't have that in me. I had to be back at work and even if I had internet, I did not bring my computer. The lady I was sitting next too had a test early in the week. I'm pretty sure she missed it. I felt bad for everyone who didn't have the resources to get out. We had money for transportation back to Lethem, hotel, and airfare. That money really adds up in a cash based society, where you need money in real time. They had to take their changes daily, some with children in tow, with a rest stop and bus as lodging. The rest stop did have some sleeping areas but overall, poverty sucks. After this adventure, Haleema was like, 'You know what I'm good for the rest of this trip Nekose. We don't need any more adventures.' She was saying that she really didn't have a proper frame of reference for rainy season and the roads being washed out until experiencing it first-hand. Now she was up for some good ole fashion SYBD (sit your butt down).

The moral of this story is two-fold 1) Listen to the signs you are given—hallelujah, amen and 2) Rock with Black and Brown folks. They will save you when you need it, and you can return the favor. Shortly after our ordeal, Alfred came to Georgetown to handle some of his local business. He took me and Haleema out to dinner with one of his employees and treated us! They picked us up in the company van and took us to a restaurant I didn't know about. We owed him and he was treating us. We had a great time. If I want to start a business in Guyana, I know who to ask questions. It would be nice to start something related to waste management that gives back to the country. Alfred also has a home in Florida. I need send that man a thank you card and visit him and the wife, if they are in the country, the next time I'm down that way!

The rest of her visit, we just found good places to eat and visited with Aunt Joyce. Haleema loved her some Aunt Joyce and the bakery! She kept saying, "Nekose, this is you." If you want to know what you are going to be like at 80, it's Aunt Joyce and you actually are her right now. We do have similar tendencies. Aunt Joyce has a spectacular vernacular and can switch from "proper" English to patois instantaneously, plus she is always going to share her opinion! It's amazing how much you can be like family even if you didn't grow up near them. On the day we got Haleema's PCR test done so she could go back to the States, we walked from Peter Rose Street to the testing location about 20-25 minutes away. Then we walked to Aunt Joyce's house, about another 10-15 minutes. Haleema prides herself on being a walker. We got to Aunt Joyce's house, and she took a nap! The sun in Guyana is hot! I don't care how much walking you are used to doing, it hits different in that Equator sun. SYBD was in full effect. A good time was had by all during her visit, and I have an adventure I will never, ever forget.

### ***Part 3, delivered in time for Valentine's Day***

***The REAL Conclusion*** of Nekose's adventures as a digital nomad will include:

- Vaccination hiatus in the U.S. • Anguilla & Sint Maarten / Saint Martin (SXM) Adventures •
- Foolishness at work brings me home for good in October '21 • Lessons Learned from traveling •



*Bonus Image -  
My Ziploc bag of not stolen jewelry*