

INTRO: This is part two of my interview with Akua Sencherey. If you have not yet listened to [part one](#), I highly recommend you go back and do that first because it provides some really important context for this episode. If you have already listened to [part one](#), then please enjoy the conclusion of my interview with Akua Sencherey.

Matt Bowles: All right, we have been talking a lot about The Continent. I think I want to circle back to your homeland of Ghana, and I want to ask you a couple of questions about it.

As you know, it is one of my favorite countries on the planet of earth. I talk about it all the time. It is so special and so amazing. I think I want to start by asking you if you can talk about your reconnection with Ghana as an adult, which I imagine would be different from going there with your family as a kid and connecting with your relatives and that kind of stuff. Now, as an adult, can you talk about your connection and some of your experiences in Ghana?

Akua Sencherey: There was a moment, honestly, not too many years ago. I think it was when I went in 2019, my grandmother actually had passed away. And I went in May, and it was really important for me to go because funeral rites and funerals as cultural events are very important for the Ashanti people. And there's a specific way you do funerals. Everything is so to a T that you have to follow. And I was in a good place where I was able to go without a job. I didn't have a job at the time and go for the full month to fully experience from start to finish what that process is like.

While I was there experiencing the funeral of my grandmother, which was a beautiful funeral, amazing. Got to connect with my cousins. I don't fly know how to speak Twi, unfortunately. So, my cousins were kind of translating for me, I was like, hey, what are they doing now? hey, what are they saying now? All right, I was making sure I learned as much as possible. And while I was there, I just had this overwhelming feeling that was, I guess, a reminder, as you do at funerals, of life's transience and the fact that I'm not going to be here forever. And not just me, but my family is not going to be here forever. And if my family's not here forever, but I'm still here. What's my connection to Ghana? What's my connection to my homeland if I don't have it on my own?

So, I was just having this inner dialogue that like, I need to establish my own comfort in Ghana by myself. I need to establish my own connections. Just because my dad taking me to his siblings houses or to his friends' houses, like maybe I need to actually establish a connection with those people, with those family members. And maintain it because there's going to be a time when I don't have them as my segue and I need to have my own connection. So that's where it started. And it's just kind of evolving from there. I had my first trip solo to Ghana at the beginning of 2023, so last year. And that was unfortunately also for a funeral.

Not that I only go back for funerals, promise not, but that one was for a funeral, but I decided to go a couple weeks earlier to go and get my own Airbnb. I was kind of excited, like, what's getting an Airbnb like in Ghana? Never mind, didn't have to because I had a cousin who was like, nope, we're hosting you, you're not getting an Airbnb. Great, awesome!

Then, obviously, went to Kumasi and got to be with the family through that funeral time and then spent a little more time afterwards, but back in Accra. Again, I was like, Airbnb. Nope. Family friend, you're not staying in Airbnb. You're staying with us. Great. Okay. But it's just this moment of trying to make a connection with the city of Accra and the city of Kumasi and also making a connection with the people that

are there and wanting to foster that relationship so that I always have a place to go when I go back, a people to connect with. But now they can also help me entrench myself in the culture, I think that's part of this evolution moving forward.

Matt Bowles: I also have to ask you about Detty December.

Akua Sencherey: Woot Woot.

Matt Bowles: I was there in 2022, turning into 2023. You were just there a few months ago.

Akua Sencherey: Yes.

Matt Bowles: This past December, turning into 2024. For people that have never heard of Detty December...and by the way, I will say this also, the first time that I went to Accra, I went for a month in 2019, and I went in the summer. So, I was there, it was around June or July in the summer, and it was unbelievable. I mean, that city is lit all the time. I mean, there's 5000 people at the Sunday party on Labadi Beach, in July, my mind was blown by what was happening around me.

And people were like, Yo, you got to come back in December. I was like, how can it be more lit than this? It's like, trust me, just come back in December. I was like, okay. So, I came back in December and wow, it was something to behold. But can you talk about your experience? And for people that have no idea, they've never heard of Detty December in Ghana. What is it? And what was it like for you?

Akua Sencherey: Detty December. We're saying 'Detty', we're really saying 'dirty', not dirty, like unclean, but dirty as in the slang version of dirty. So Detty December is a complete vibe. It's essentially trying to bring back the diaspora to Ghana, saying, come home, homecoming, come home.

A lot of people from America, a lot of people from Brazil, given the triangular slave trade on the west side of Africa, around that diaspora in England, Europe as well. They're saying, hey, come home and come experience your home. And so that's where the foundation of this coming December started. There was a music festival called Afrocella, which was also drawing people, was drawing artists, was drawing celebrities to come and just experience Ghana and come home.

Now what it has become is more than just a festival, more than just a homecoming. Essentially what it still is today is a huge music festival now called Afrofuture, which draws amazing artists, still draws amazing celebrities, amazing creatives. What I was very interested in and shocked by is that it's not just about parties, day parties and late nights at the beach. It was also a tech conference on a Tuesday to talk about, hey, how is AI affecting or integrating or spurring on the tech scene in Africa? What types of problems is AI solving for us? What types of problems could it solve for us? On the continent, uniquely outside of our context of the Western world. It was also an economic forum where the president of Ghana spoke at, where Boris Kodjoe and Fred Swaniker spoke at, a Ghanaian entrepreneur.

It was fashion. It was different fashion meetups. It was Bozoma Saint John having a badass women's connect as well. There were a lot of things that I actually wasn't surprised when I really get into it, cause that's just how the diaspora acts. We're not just one thing, we're all of these things we can get up in the morning and do the conference buttoned up. We can have a nice dinner in the evening, and we can go and hang out and get pretty dusty right at night, like we can do all the things. And I was so amazingly and pleasantly surprised and shocked, but also again, not at the same time that all of these things existed in Detty December, so it's just a huge vibe.

It's a way for people to come and connect with Ghana as a place. It's a way for people to come and connect with the diaspora that's traveling there, and it's a way for you to come and be inspired and to be energized and to just be ready to get into your next year. That's what I would say Detty December is.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, it was entirely amazing. I mean, start to finish the whole... every moment, I mean, and it is round the clock. It's the concerts that go till two and then the after parties go till seven and then there's day parties. And so, whatever hours you choose to keep, you can do that in Accra was really spectacular.

When I was there, they had actually two festivals at the same time overlapping that Afrofuture and Afronation were both there. And so, I ended up getting tickets to both. And then you just had so many options of all this stuff that you could do. I also went to a Black-tie gala.

Akua Sencherey: Yeah. Tell me more about that.

Matt Bowles: It was unbelievable. It was called the Royals. And the way I actually found out about it; this is incredible. I'm interviewing a podcast guest on The Maverick Show, Ivy Hsu, big shout out to Ivy Hsu. She is Chinese Canadian, and she is very into the crypto and entrepreneurial space and the crypto space and NFT space.

We're talking about all the amazing stuff she's doing. She runs a community called Asian Wander Women, which is super badass and incredible. And it's just doing really fantastic stuff in terms of like female entrepreneurship and like really interesting things. And towards the end of the interview, I said, tell me some of the coolest NFT projects that you've just personally bought into. And she goes, well, one of the coolest ones I bought into is this thing called the Royals, and you buy this NFT, and the NFT gets you admission into a Black-tie gala in Accra, Ghana in December and the only way you can get in is with this NFT. I was like, what? And so as soon as the interview was over, I immediately go online. I immediately buy the NFT and I'm like, nah, you know what? I'm taking a date. I'm buying two NFTs. So that's happening. Cause there's only one admission per person and no plus ones in this gala. So. I'm like, God, I'm buying two NFTs. So then later on, actually, we'll bring Sean Tierney back into the story.

I go to Lisbon for my birthday. And while I'm there, this is in May, a couple of years back, I hit up Sean, of course, and some other friends of mine that were going to be in the Lisbon area or coming into Lisbon area. And we go, and we just kind of like rent this villa in the Alentejo wine region and just like go for a weekend of wine tasting, like living in this villa with like a bunch of my friends and people like, yo, what are you up to for the rest of the year? I was like, well, I'm going on this four-month, all-Africa trip with Remote Year to the continent. And also, I'm going to this gala in Ghana in December and I'm doing Detty in December and I'm going to Black tie gala. I'm doing this and this. And then the other people that were there were like looking at me like yo, can we roll to that? I was like, sure! And so, then I started just showing people how to buy these NFTs, how to get into the gala, like all this different kind of stuff. And it was really quite extraordinary.

So, it was black tie, most people chose to wear traditional Ghanaian formal wear. I was in Senegal in Dakar the month before that gala, Dakar of course is like the fashion capital of that whole region. I mean, it is spectacular. If you're going to try to get clothes made, getting them made in Dakar is really the place to get them.

But I said to him, I was like, listen, I'm going to this gala in Ghana. Like this needs to be Ghanaian -specific. They're like, we got it. We understand it. We know it. We can do Ghanaian gear, with no problem. So, they make me this custom Ghanaian outfit for this event. And then there were multiple other people, again, that

I had told about this thing that were there with me, they were going also, so they all had Ghanaian formal wear custom-made in Senegal. And we went to the event, and it was just amazing. I mean, it was just a truly extraordinary evening. It was a fashion show. It was a concert with Ghanaian Afrobeat artists. It was magical. It was absolutely amazing in every way. And this was only one evening of the entire week plus that I was there between Christmas to shortly after new year's.

And there was that, and then of course there was Afro-nation, there was Afro future, Burna Boy and everybody else was in town. And then of course, all of the Ghanaian artists, Stone Bwoy and everybody else was there. I mean, it was, one thing after another, and then there just became these incredible stories, legend stories that started circulating, which still to this day is some of the most incredible stuff I had ever heard.

So Meek Mill was coming to Ghana to perform at one of these festivals, I think it was the Afro-nation festival, right? Meek Mill is a rapper from Philadelphia. And I believe it was his first time on the continent. I think it was certainly his first time in Ghana. And he was coming over to perform at this festival. So, one of his first days there in Ghana, he gets his phone stolen. Okay. Somebody steals Meek Mill's phone. That evening, Shatta Wale, who is a Ghanaian Afrobeat legend, sends out a tweet. And the tweet says, 'Streets, we cannot do Meek Mill like that.'. And says this whole thing, Meek Mill is from the streets and he's this and that, the whole thing.

And he goes, I want Meek Mill's phone returned to him by tomorrow morning. Meek Mill's phone was returned to him the next day.

Akua Sencherey: That is such a crazy story.

Matt Bowles: It was unbelievable.

Akua Sencherey: That is one that is so common to get your phone stolen, right, lost, whatever, but how amazing if every time you got something stolen, you literally just had someone famous of that country or culture vouch for you and say, hey, fam, this ain't cool. Send it back. And then you actually got your thing back. That could only happen to Meek Mill. I don't know if that could happen to anyone else in Ghana, but wow.

Matt Bowles: I don't know, but it was amazing. Like these types of stories just kept unfolding and these types of experiences just kept happening. And it was like one magical day after another magical day.

And then when Burna Boy took the stage, I mean, that was something that I don't think I've ever seen anything like it. So, at these music festival events, you know, you were just there, there's 20,000 something people, and they're kind of, you know, all there. And even if it's like a huge artist on stage, like Fireboy DML, or some of these really high profile, A-list Afrobeat artists, still, there's a couple of people that are going to be like milling around or talking to the bartender, ordering a drink or trying to buy something or whatever.

When Burna Boy took the stage, a hundred percent of the human beings were laser focused on the stage. Every phone was up in the air, videoing this stuff. And every single human being saying every word of every song and it was just one of the most incredible things I've ever seen. Now, Burna Boy is one of the most incredible musicians and live performers of my lifetime of the modern era of any musical category, so, I imagine that any Burna Boy concert would be extraordinary, but seeing him perform in West Africa was just, there was something that was just so special about it and I will never forget it.

Akua Sencherey: Yeah. That sounds like a life-changing experience. Do you think you could even top that? Like in terms of like concert going experiences or is that still to this day? Just like a moment you look back and you're like, Oh my gosh, how amazing.

Matt Bowles: It was so amazing I think because of the place, that's what I'm saying. Like, I think Burna Boy is such an incredible artist. And I think any of his shows would be unbelievable to attend as he tours around, but there was just something about being in West Africa and seeing all of these West African artists perform in front of a majority West African crowd.

Akua Sencherey: And bring it to December?

Matt Bowles: Yeah, exactly. Right. Exactly. Yeah. I mean, it was just the compilation of all of those things together that just made it just a really magical experience. And it's impacted me to this day for sure. Like I'm still telling people about it all the time. Like, it's amazing if you can get there and you can get to Ghana at any time. I tell people, listen, anytime of the year you want to go to Ghana, just go. It'll all be amazing. But if you can go at the end of December, between December and New Year's and go to some of that, it is really special and unique.

Akua Sencherey: It is special and unique. I also encourage it. I encourage anyone who wants to travel to Ghana to go in at both times. If you can go before Detty December, not necessarily like right before, but like at a different time of the year, but definitely come back for it. It's just something that you can't fully explain, but if you haven't been around a bunch of diaspora people in a certain place that's very special like that, it's hard to really explain.

Matt Bowles: It was also, I think, one of the most unique experiences with regard to the diversity of the African diaspora that was in attendance. And that, of course, is by design. And so, the DJs and the organizers of the events know exactly who is there. And I would just guess, like, if I were to just sort of take a ballpark guess, I would guess that at these events, the musical festival events and the New Year's Eve parties and that kind of stuff, I would guess it's probably around 50 percent Ghanaian and then around 50 percent African diaspora from all over the place and the DJs know who is in the crowd.

And so, they will play like a song from Atlanta and shout out Atlanta. And then they will play a song from New York, and they will shout out New York, but then they'll play a song from Lagos, and they'll shout out Lagos. It'll play a song from South Africa and shout out South Africa. And so, it is the African diaspora from around the continent. And from around the world, all there in one place. And it is just a really unique vibe in that sense, too, I thought.

Akua Sencherey: Yeah, it is true. The diversity of that this time around I very much noticed the amount of, I think, more Americans, like Black Americans than I had known for it to be popular too. A lot of Amapiano this time around.

I was actually learning a lot of new music, learning a lot of dance moves, actually learning some Amapiano dance moves. I don't know if that's what you call it, but how to dance to that music. Yeah. I recommend it. You have got to get there. You got to get yourself to Ghana in December.

Matt Bowles: I want to ask you Akua a little bit about some of your reflections now on travel and identity, and some of this stuff at this point in your journey. Can you start off maybe by talking a little bit about just

the dynamic of dual citizenships and the reflection and journey of exploring your identity abroad as you've traveled around?

Akua Sencherey: Yeah, I really like your question because there is a constant talk about privilege in the United States. And I believe that yes, as a Black, again, dark-skinned African American woman in the United States, there's a certain level of privilege that I do and do not have coming from an immigrant family. And with two passports, a U. S. passport, and a Ghanaian passport, that is another level of privilege. And I am very aware of how I can move about the world with both of those passports, interchanging, if I need to, with whatever, is to my advantage entering into a country. And I just became really hyper aware that once I got my Ghanaian passport, it was kind of a sense of pride to me.

I recently was telling someone that I have it the way that I communicated it was like, oh, I'm Ghanaian now. And they're like, wait, but you've always been. And I was like, yeah, yeah, yeah. You're right. I have always been Ghanaian. But for some reason, the passport, for some reason, legitimizes me. No one can tell me I'm not, but it's interesting to have that dynamic within me of feeling privileged at some points and then drastically not feeling like I have a level of privilege in other points. The way in which it influences travel for me and just the reflections on identity in general is, I'm the same way I struggled with it, didn't really understand it growing up in a very wide space in Texas to going to college and being around a lot of other African American, right? West African American people to then being in New York, a really hyper amazing melting pot. And then to finally traveling the world. I am starting to come to understand what my identity is and coming to be kind of proud of both sides.

I know I am harsh. I can be harsh about my American side, given history, uncovering a lot politically, but I still believe that I was born in the U. S. for a reason. I believe that my upbringing there and my parents, choosing to move there and choosing to start a family there has set me up in a way that if I were in a different context, wouldn't be the case.

And I am truly proud of my Ghanaian side, which is, I'm still forming what that means to me and how I express it. My American side, I express probably more because I'm so familiar with it and I grew up in it, but the Ghanaian side of me I'm very excited to continue to see how I live and operate in that identity and how I also foster that and hopefully inspire other people to do the same with their dual identities or multiple identities.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to ask you about your experience navigating anti-Blackness globally as you move through the world. And any tips that you may have for Black travelers, perhaps that might be at the earlier part of their journey.

Akua Sencherey: Yes, I've said it before, somewhere, documented, that I do not believe the color of your skin, your gender, or your sexual orientation should hinder you from traveling to a place that you want to travel to.

Don't let fear, don't let the potential of something, don't let someone's bad experience that they told you about their trip two years ago, five years ago, last year, scare you into thinking that your experience will be the same. I have been amazingly embraced by different cultures around the world. And I've also experienced racism in ways that I was, I guess not surprised by, but was still shocked in the context of, for example, in Croatia, I'll just say this.

I don't think I've given many examples of this yet, but. In Croatia, I was actually with a Remote Year group at the time. I wasn't traveling with the Remote Year, but I was there. And so, I tapped into the community that was there, and we were riding bikes. It was actually a really cool experience. We were just riding our bikes through the old town, doing a little tour. And we were just in a single file line through the old town. And if you know, old towns, they're small streets. There's oftentimes a lot of tourists walking around and a guy out of my periphery just kind of stumbles towards me. And all I see is like a very, kind of large, local, white Croatian man, his face is like red. And he's like, in my city, you do not bike. He like kind of grabs me and jostles me and says, in my city, you do not bike in his like broken English. And I was just kind of shaken up by that one, because he literally had his hands on me. So, there's a moment where you're like, am I being assaulted? Is this about to get more physical than this?

Trying to process what he was saying, trying to process the context of being in such a beautiful place and having a calm morning of biking through the city. And when that happened to me, it kind of shakes you. It shakes you when, no matter how often you hear, at least for me, I can only speak for myself, no matter how often I hear about racist experiences, hear about racial violence, experience it myself, it always shocks me. It always jostles me and kind of throws me off. And I was thrown off at that moment. I had like one or two people in the group kind of bring comfort to me and be like, hey, are you okay? Like, I saw that. That's not okay. The person who was a local there with the Remote Year group, I think she did a really nice job.

So, I felt really supported by her. She's like, hey, this is not a reflection of Croatian people. This man, that was not okay what he did to you. If you need any other support, let me know, right. She was very supportive, but it just goes to show that you may go to a place and experience these things that you think are only so prevalent in the U.S. or that only happened there.

Like, don't think that just because you're outside of the U.S. that you won't experience racism, but you will get through it, get support in the place that you are, if you need it immediately, if it's something that's really shaking you. I will also say, seek to forgive and seek to not let that experience taint your idea of the place. I think, again, I was shaken by that experience by that man, but there was no other indication to me that the people of Croatia, the place of Croatia was a place I should not go back to, that I was unsafe there. So, I would just process, if you have an experience like that, I will process it. And I would say if you go somewhere and you feel completely embraced, again, just enjoy and truly be yourself in whatever place that you travel to.

Matt Bowles: I think that is really good advice. I want to ask a little bit to know about how you think about structuring your travel and your lifestyle's reading one of your blog posts from back in 2018. And one of the things you said in that blog post was traveling became more than seeing a new place and learning Spanish was more than the ability to hold a conversation. I realized that my goal was to be able to connect. With people and cultures on a deeper level. So that was back in 2018. I'm curious since then, how has that gone for you and how do you now structure your travel experiences?

Akua Sencherey: In 2018, I was very focused on, because I was working for Remote Year, it was very much connecting with people as much as possible. It tended to be people who were doing the Remote Year programs, which was still super eye opening and very much connecting with different types of people from all over the world with different perspectives. It also was for 2018 a bit of travel to places where I hope to learn the language. That ability to connect with people whenever I was in Peru was so amazing because I had known Spanish and because I could speak it, practice it, etc.

So, I continue to try and travel to places where I could either learn the language quickly, feel comfortable maybe using Google Translate to get around, or places where I had already known the foreign language, or where Spanish can be spoken, if you're able. So that had, at that time, encouraged me to travel to more of Spain, to stay in Valencia, for example, for about five, six weeks, to travel more of South America, which I did into 2019, traveling into Ecuador, traveling into Chile.

What it has done for me has allowed me to do the things that I love while connecting with people. For example, when I traveled to Ecuador, I was by myself for the first few weeks before a friend joined me, I joined a CrossFit gym. Because I work out pretty consistently. CrossFit's one of those things that I was doing at the time.

I said, why don't I use this as a way to connect with the community? And I was able to not only improve my CrossFit skills, learn different terms in Spanish, but also just see a new way of exercising in a new way of fitness as a community. Same example I have for a time that I spent in Mexico that I was staying with a host.

I just shared a room in his place, and he would go to this fitness thing every Tuesday and Thursday morning just in Parque Mexico. And I was like, okay, yeah, I'll go. It's pretty affordable. It's more of a group and community. I was able to go to that again, learn some new Spanish words, but was funny because the instructor was actually Brazilian.

So, he was speaking Portuguese for the most part. So learned a bit of Portuguese too. And they also invited me to like a yoga class as well. They invited me to someone's birthday party who is in the group. I think the way I've structured travel around connecting with people has really been, what do I already enjoy and what are ways that I can just do that in that culture and context.

And especially if it's in a Spanish speaking place, I feel very comfortable to go out and about cause I can speak Spanish in a French speaking place I get by, but I oftentimes look at fitness as my foray fitness or soccer as my foray into how to connect, right, and how to make a deeper connection with people.

Matt Bowles: Well, I want to ask you about how you are merging your professional career trajectory with your travel interests and your passion for the continent of Africa. Can you give folks a little bit of context just since Remote Year, what your journey has been in the tech startup space, and what you're up to now with Andela? And what your current interests are with regard to tech in Africa.

Akua Sencherey: When it comes to my work with Andela, it's pretty cool. The position I'm in at the moment, working as a product marketing manager. And essentially, I get to learn a ton about what the ecosystem is in Africa of talent, especially technical talent who are software developers, engineers, et cetera, what the landscape of hiring is on the continent.

And really what I'm doing is helping that talent as well as talent in Latin America and around the world who we've vetted and are a part of our network, get jobs for remote companies from all over. So, it's actually been a really rewarding and mission driven opportunity, but I just get to geek out on all the data around it and get to geek out on all the trends that are happening and the fact that the company started in Nigeria and the fact that the company still has much of a connection to Africa.

My own interest in the topic is really just how can Africa really come up and it has been on the come up in different areas, different industries, different scenes, but how can this idea of talent, this idea of people

who actually are really smart, really talented, really have the chops. How can we make sure that they have the same opportunity as someone who is based in the U.S., based in Europe?

I am really interested in that as a foundation of things. And the way I connected to some of the, I guess, mission and things that I'm trying to work on, too, is in general, just the tech scene in Africa. What does that look like? What are the ecosystems that exist? There's talk of Silicon Savannah in East Africa.

If you talk to someone who's in the U.S. do, they have any context of what that means? Maybe not. But hey, that is actually a place and a topic that is huge. When you talk about global tech, when you talk about FinTech, when you talk about investments in Africa, there are ecosystems as well that I wish saw more African presence in. For example, if I'm looking on a newsletter that I constantly get from NFR magazine or Conde Nast travel magazine, and they're talking about, oh, 'The top 10 Places' or 'The Places That Nomads Go'. I don't see a lot of West Africa. I maybe see South Africa. I maybe see Egypt, but I'm not seeing a lot of West Africa on there. I'm not seeing a lot of East Africa. I'm not seeing a lot of places where I think, even if I haven't been, that deserve a seat at that table. So, I think a part of my interest in this idea of tech, this idea of what talents are doing on the continent. This idea of growth of Africa is around. What are these places that we're not talking about that I believe should be talked about in the conversation of a tech ecosystem and a tech hub? Even if we don't have a valley or an alley or a Silicon name for them.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. It's really incredible for folks who spend time on the continent. You go to cities like Nairobi in Kenya, and it is unbelievable. I mean, in terms of what's going on there with regard to the entrepreneurial tech scene and some of this kind of stuff. So, there is some really extraordinary stuff happening. What are your future plans and vision for slowmadding around the continent and immersing in the tech scene and all that good stuff? What are you thinking about?

Akua Sencherey: Yes, slowmadding. I like that. It's intentional. It's not moving around every week or two weeks. Yes, slowmadding. I am very excited for a few locations this year that I'll travel to, that I hope to tap into the tech ecosystem. And also, naturally just find what the greatness is about that country or city because I do tend to go to cities. I don't always get a chance to travel everywhere, so I can really speak for cities. This year I plan to go to Dakar, Senegal during the Biennale. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that correctly, which is every other year, art festival that happens in Dakar. And it's supposed to be a massive thing. You already mentioned it. Fashion is huge in that city, in that country. So, I'm very interested as well in tapping into what both of those things look like and feel like. I will also be working remotely there. So, I would like to tap into the local remote tech scene.

The interesting part will be the French. I think that the tough thing is that being in French-speaking African countries, they are very much French, French first, and not to discredit that at all, but it's tough for us English-speaking people. Like, even if they spoke Spanish, I'd be like, hey, great. But no, it's French. You have to speak French. Or Wolof, I guess, in Dakar, and maybe other dialects, but I will do my best to also tap into the tech ecosystem there.

I'm very much looking forward to Namibia, to go to Windhoek. They were colonized by the German people, so I'm also interested in what that language dynamic might be like. I'm interested in if it feels more like South Africa with more white people there, or it feels more native in different parts of the city, in different parts that I may visit outside of the city. And I also will be interested in the tech ecosystem because I have not heard much about Namibia on the tech scene.

So, I want to learn more there. I have a few other countries that I may visit, Angola being one of them, Uganda being one of them, Rwanda being one of them, potentially a Burundi and a Botswana. I know I'm, I'm kind of going around the map here, but mentioning a few other places that are potentially on my list and hoping to, of course, visit Ghana again and tap back into the tech ecosystem that I've seen there.

Matt Bowles: Those are some incredibly amazing countries. I have spent probably three months in Senegal. I spent about a month in Angola and then I have spent shorter periods in Rwanda and Uganda, but both were incredible. So, when you are ready to plan the details of those trips, obviously you and I will be in touch and I'm happy to give you some tips on those.

And speaking of travel tips, I want to ask for your recommendations for folks that want to visit Ghana. We talked a little bit about Accra, but if you have more specific recommendations, I also want to ask you to speak a little bit about Cape Coast, which, for me, is a very important place. I mean, just like I said, that Americans need to go and spend time and visit Hiroshima, I also feel like Americans need to go and spend time and visit Cape Coast. And I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about Cape Coast and also anything else that you recommend for Ghana and for folks maybe that have never been, and they want to have a first trip to Ghana, any tips that you might have.

Akua Sencherey: If you go to Ghana and you have time, I think of course you will likely fly into Accra, the capital city. If you're in Accra, you will want to enjoy a lot of the historical monuments and things that are there.

So, the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum in sight, memorial garden, you'll want to go and check that out. You'll want to go and check out the history museum that's there. They're building an amazing and really massive cultural museum. I'm not sure when it'll be finished. You'll want to check that out as well. You may also want to go to the theater and you, from a cultural perspective, should check out the Makola Market. It may be a bit hectic. It may be very overwhelming to your senses, but it's definitely how commerce happens in the trenches. If you're in Africa, you know, you're going to some kind of market. And most of the time it's pretty chaotic, but that's the way it is. And that's a part of the experience. So, I would recommend there.

There's also a slew of restaurants, a slew of really nice spots from small street Kelewele spots to really high-end restaurants. To brunch on a rooftop or brunch at a really nice five-star restaurant. There's a range of dining experiences as well that I would recommend to people. What comes to the top of mind is a place called Jamestown Coffee Roasters.

I love going to coffee shops in different places around the world, and Jamestown uses coffee beans that are grown in Ghana. And they have their own proper way of roasting. So, I'd recommend trying their coffee if you do enjoy coffee. I would recommend a buffet called Azmera, if I'm getting the name correctly, if I'm remembering their name correctly. It has all of the traditional Ghanaian food that you would want to try in one buffet. So, you get to get the fufu, you get to get peanut butter soup, palm nut so up, you get to get Kontomire, you get to get Omutuo, you get to get everything. Even the drinks, right? Even the different drinks that you can try. I just recommend that as it's a little pricey, but I recommend that as a good lay of the land for Ghanaian food.

I also recommend, if you have additional time outside of just visiting Accra, to go to Cape Coast, as you mentioned. And Cape Coast, and really the coast of Ghana in general, there is a lot of history around the slave trade, and a lot of slave castles and forts that were built by different colonizers at different times.

Some were built by the Portuguese, some built by the British, or later taken over by the British. Cape Coast has one of the largest castles in the site that has a large Slaveholding place and where they would sell slaves off and ship them to 'The New World' and different parts of our side of the equator.

Honestly, if I had some kind of sway and if I had a lot of money, I would provide a program where American students as young as in high school, would actually have a trip to Ghana and to understand a bit more of what that slave experience was like through a trip to Cape Coast. It always brings you really to tears and brings you to the reality of what the slave experience was like.

A little controversial in West Africa and on the continent, but nevertheless, very much connected to American history. I as well would recommend someone to go even further to the North Inland in the region. I'm biased, I would say come to Kumasi, the seat of the Ashanti Kingdom. You're able to go to Manhyia Palace, which is where the current king lives and where actually a lot of cultural events happen.

There's an amazing museum there that talks about the Ashanti culture, the different symbolism with Kente and the different symbolism in the culture. Adinkra symbols as well are explained and a bit more of the reveal or the hood taken back of some of the cultural practices. Not all of them when it comes to how the king is instilled and how the king comes to power are revealed to the world because some of it's a bit more spiritual, a bit more mystic, a bit more just very under wraps, but you get a really great understanding of the Ashanti kingdom, which was once one of the most wealthy and powerful kingdoms in the world.

I would also recommend a trip even further north; Mole National Park is a reserve where you can go and experience nature in its vast glory. They offer walking safaris, which I've done a few times where you literally can walk around elephants are near you, you might see some rhinos as well, and tons of monkeys. It's kind of a scary place because again, you're just walking around and you could just literally see an elephant coming towards you, but it's a really cool and much more quaint Safari experience than going to like a Kruger in South Africa or somewhere else. I wouldn't say Ghana is the place to safari, but I would recommend Mole if you had more time and if you're willing to take the trip out.

There are so many other recommendations; there's surfing in Ghana, there's a ton of other art, there's a ton of other regions. Even the Vulture like there is just so many other places to go resorts and things but we only have so much time.

Matt Bowles: Well, we are going to link that up in [the show notes](#). And I would also add that I think Ghana is a spectacular place for remote working and taking a medium-term, long term slow mad journey and remote working from a city like Accra. It was spectacular. The internet was fantastic. West Africa in general is a really magical region. And it's one of my favorite regions in the world. And Ghana in particular is really special. And Accra is a fantastic city to post up in and work remotely from. So, you know, Akua, how much I love your homeland. So, I'm just glad that we can put it on people's radars here. So, we'll link up some of those recommendations in [the show notes](#).

When you think back on your personal journey, how do you think that all of this travel that you've done up to this point in your life has impacted you as a person?

Akua Sencherey: I think I'm still unraveling that impact. I have a lot of stories to tell. I have seen a lot and experienced a lot, and a part of me thinks there's going to be a moment where I realize the responsibility of all this experience, and I actually come to know what I do with it all. But I will say that to this date, I believe my experience of traveling has made me a more empathetic person.

It's made me a bit more understanding. It's made me always be open to another perspective, especially about the United States, where I grew up, where I come from. I'm always open to hearing someone's criticism about it, reasons why someone might love it, et cetera. I believe it has made my mind able to make connections to things in a way that I don't know if I live the same life in the same city, I would be able to make connections of from history to culture to music to food.

I'm literally charting in my mind, I, how the world has come to be as I'm traveling, I'm picking up different history and different stories and piecing it all together and really understanding a bit more of the world. I don't think I'll ever come to full understanding, but it's just cool to continue to be on that learning journey.

And I've met a lot of amazing people. That's changed me. Met so many amazing people. It'd be cool to see a tapestry of all the humans that I've met on this journey that I still keep in touch with or that I know longer but are still in my mind and memory. Yeah, I just really think that I would love for my travel experience to come to be something. I'm still trying to figure out what it becomes.

Matt Bowles: And you're choosing to continue the journey, so, why do you continue to travel? What does travel mean to you today?

Akua Sencherey: I believe I have new intentions. It's not just about, hey, I got to keep adding count. Do I need to see every single country in the world? Maybe not.

Like, it's not necessarily a goal of mine but there are specific places that I believe in this phase of my life, being single, not having any ownership of anything in the U.S., not having a family yet. I believe I'm just in a really perfect time in my life to continue doing this and to continue to follow that curiosity I have in that intention to learn very specific things that, yes, I can easily learn these things in a book or online, got it.

But because I have the opportunity to work remotely and to move around the world, I'm using that opportunity to explore those interests.

Matt Bowles: Well, I think that is an amazing place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Akua, are you ready to move into the lightning round?

Akua Sencherey: I am ready. I was born ready, as they say.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it.

All right. We're starting off with a banger. Which country has the best jollof, Nigeria or Ghana?

Akua Sencherey: There is no question, Matt. It's Ghanaian jollof. Before you even finished the question, I was going to say Ghana. You didn't even have to add Nigeria. I knew it was Ghana. The answer is Ghana always.

Matt Bowles: Listen, we like to platform the jollof wars here on this podcast. And so, all of my Ghanaian and Nigerian guests get this question. But for people who maybe haven't heard previous answers or previous discussions, and maybe this is even their first-time hearing about the Jollof Wars and about the dish of jollof rice, can you share a little bit about what is jollof rice and what is the deal with the jollof wars?

Akua Sencherey: So jollof rice is a quintessential dish across West Africa. I'll be honest, other West African countries outside of the two that we've named today, eat and make jollof. What 'war' is about is which tastes the best, right?

Is the way that it's prepared the best, et cetera, et cetera. So, you'll have your friends if you go to any of these West African countries say, hey, try the jollof. Isn't it great? Isn't it good? Tell everyone about it. The truth is that Ghana just makes it the best and what it essentially tastes like and the experience you have when you eat Ghanaian jollof is, it is perfectly cooked rice that is stewed in a tomato, also a lot of herbs and spices, the right amount of salt. It has a little bit of meat sometimes, a little bit of corned beef, if you're from that side, right. The Portuguese influence we got our canned meats there. Sometimes the peas. I know people knock the peas in jollof rice.

Anyway, I know this is supposed to be lightning round, but you just experience home when you eat Ghanaian jollof. There is no other jollof. I think we can move on.

Matt Bowles: Hahaha. Mic drop. Next question.

All right. Akua, what is one book maybe that has significantly impacted you that you would most recommend people should read?

Akua Sencherey: Yes. I would recommend today, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* by Walter Rodney. Great read, very academic, but when I tell you it will change your perspective about Africa in a lot of ways, that's what it is.

Matt Bowles: That is a really good recommendation, and folks should look up Walter Rodney if they're not familiar with him, including his entire life and how he was assassinated in a car bomb and everything else. But the book is from many decades ago, but still really important and significant. So, I think that's a really good recommendation.

Akua, who is one person currently alive today, that you've never met, that you'd most love to have dinner with? Just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation.

Akua Sencherey: Yes, I love this question, and I love that they have to be alive. As I was traveling recently through Africa, I kept hearing this name and I was like, man, I really need to like to connect with this person. It's a possibility that this dinner might actually happen. This is not a farfetched thing, but my answer is Fred Swaniker. He's a Ghanaian entrepreneur. He's founded the African Leadership Academy, and African Leadership College, and probably has a million other ideas that he hasn't executed or others that aren't as prominent as those two, but he essentially is helping talent across Africa to fulfill its potential and also to change the continent for the better. Uh, and I just keep hearing his name in the tech ecosystem the Ghana ecosystem, and the entrepreneur ecosystems.

Matt Bowles: All right. Akua, what is one travel hack that you use that you can recommend to people?

Akua Sencherey: I try to get to the time zone of where I'm going immediately. The ways in which I do that, of course, you have to think about the clock. Is it daytime right now when I'm getting on a plane? Is it nighttime? If it's nighttime, I'm immediately going to sleep. I don't care if a meal's coming up, I'm going to sleep. I'm washing my face with my cleanser. I'm putting on my face serums, my moisturizer, my eye cream. I get in my seat. I put my eye mask on. I put my earplugs in. I put my neck pillow and I'm asleep. Like I'm literally just getting into the time zone immediately. That's my hack.

Matt Bowles: All right, Akua, what is one piece of advice, knowing everything that you know now if you could go back in time, that you would give to your 18-year-old self? What would you say to 18-year-old Akua?

Akua Sencherey: I would say to my 18-year-old self to trust God more with the journey and to be ready to constantly evolve as a person and to level yourself up. But at every level, having a trust in what God's doing and where he's taking you, that it's purposeful, that even if it's hard, it's going to be okay, that you're going to get through it.

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

Akua Sencherey: I would say the first one is Brazil. I love Brazil. I think if I believed in former lives, one of my former lives had to have been a Carioca, literally a Brazilian from Rio. Like I just think I'm that person deep inside. I would definitely recommend Brazil. I have so much more I want to explore in that country. I really pray for its success. I know they're going through a lot.

The next country I would say is Vietnam. I really thought Vietnam was such a cool eclectic mix of what seems like the past a bit, but what's its own modern culture, what's a cool food scene, what's just a very okay. I don't know, it was just one of the coolest places. Hanoi is where I'm speaking of, but one of the coolest cities and I want to go back to Vietnam because of it. Definitely recommend it.

And then a newer one is New Zealand. I was only in New Zealand for two weeks and really only stayed in Auckland, but I just scratch the surface. The people were so nice. The culture is so interesting. The Maori aspect of it, how it's so isolated where it is in the world. Very much New Zealand is a place that I know and recommend, but I'd like to explore more too.

Matt Bowles: All right, Akua, what are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you have not yet been. Highest on your list. You would most love to see.

Akua Sencherey: My first one is Poland. Poland's on my short list for my next country to go to in Europe, mainly for history purposes. I really want to dig into history there. And I think the food actually might be pretty good. I'm actually really interested in Polish food.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm going to Namibia and very much excited about that. So, I put that as one of my bucket list places. And then, not a country, but a state in the U.S., Alaska. I've always wanted to go to Alaska. I want to do all the nature things. I want to learn how to fish. I want to be on a boat. I want to do some hiking in Alaska.

Matt Bowles: All right, Akua, I want you to put my audience on to some of these amazing Afrobeats that we have been discussing on this episode. For folks that want to start their journey, get into some Afrobeats. Who are five of your favorite artists that you would recommend people should listen to?

Akua Sencherey: Yes. These are five artists that I just love to listen to, regardless of what I'm feeling, what time of day it is, and where I'm in the world.

So Asake, I just, anytime I hear his voice, it's just such a cool voice he has. And like, I'm thinking for you and I'm recommending. If you haven't heard of Asake – A-S-A-K-E. The song Organize, to me, that song has a jazz feel, it has a Latin feel, it has an Afrobeats feel. I'm like, am I by the beach? Am I in a speakeasy? Like, where am I, right? The music just like, takes you to so many different places. And I think that's what his music does when I listen to it, so. Asake's first.

Gotta put Burna Boy on the list. Doesn't matter what song. I just love his creativity. I love his stardom. Whether or not he has a million awards or not, he is one of the greatest artists of our time.

Serge Ibaka, I'm taking you a little bit. So Afrobeats, I think in the English-speaking African world, right, is, is very widespread, but I've started to peel the layers of the French-speaking because somewhere in my time I try to learn French. Serge Ibaka is one that has come up a lot in my playlists.

Also, Tété. Very much love his music. Also, French speaking and they kind of give me a bit more dynamism, right? Not just English speaking. I don't always know what they're saying. I have to really listen, and I have to sometimes Google it because I, again, don't speak French fully.

The last one I'll say, and I don't know if I'm saying his name correctly, is Tam Sir. His song for the AFKON 2023 tournament was literally everywhere while I was there in Ivory Coast. And every time I hear it, I just get excited and think about the tournament and then they have this dance to it that if you Google Coup du marteau, that dance will just get you up and dancing. So, I recommend him mainly because of that song, but I'm sure the rest of his music is great.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Akua, we are going to close this out by me asking you to name your Top 5 Hip Hop Emcees of all time. But before we do that, can you just share a little bit about what hip hop music means to you and why you love hip hop?

Akua Sencherey: Yeah, Hip hop is, I would say the way in which I really connect with Black American culture. Again, I grew up in a white space. I grew up from an immigrant family. I didn't always understand blackness, but Hip Hop made me understand blackness. And it connected in a way that I was like, yep, I am Black because what you're saying, I resonate with and what you're saying, I can just feel in my bones.

Matt Bowles: All right. Akua, who are your top five?

Akua Sencherey: Okay, so Mos Def is one that I actually found through a movie called Brown Sugar. Actually, that was the first time I really liked listening to Mos Def and love his vibe, love his music, love his sound. It's one of those songs that I just feel like you listen to when you're walking down the street. It's just liked a comforting beats, great head nods.

Next is Nas. If you want to think a little bit, if you want to get a bit more into the nitty gritty of the lyrics, very lyrical, really love Nas, what, what he speaks about and what he's trying to communicate when he raps.

I don't always listen to mainstream music of today, but Kendrick Lamar is one that I really appreciate his music. I appreciate what he's trying to do with his music. Not all artists are trying to be political or make a statement. I don't know if he's always trying to do that, but I feel like he is very much saying and being forceful and making a stand about what he believes through his music. And I respect that and love that about his music. So, I continue to try and see what he's doing, what's new with his music.

My top two are all-time faves. Top two; The Roots. Love The Roots. They are the reason why I started watching the Jimmy Fallon show, Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, and then The Tonight Show, literally because they were the house band. If it wasn't for the Roots, I probably wouldn't, not that I wouldn't like Jimmy Fallon, but I just would be a bit more indifferent. The Roots keep my eyes on Jimmy Fallon.

And my all-time favorite, and I'm very specific about this, is Kanye West, pre-808s & Heartbreaks. So I'm thinking Graduation, I'm thinking his earlier albums, there was something about the way Kanye West came up that I just really enjoyed watching and experiencing because I was at a time when I could see his rise, and I just liked what he was talking about back then, how real he was, how authentic he was, not that he's not anymore, but the sound of how that authenticity came through in his art and music, I really enjoyed.

Matt Bowles: You know, I just saw The Roots in concert just over this past year,

Akua Sencherey: I'm jealous. Where was it?

Matt Bowles: Which was really spectacular. Actually, it was in Bentonville, Arkansas, which is the city that my sister just moved to about a year and a half ago. And I'd never been to the state of Arkansas. And she moved from New Jersey. And I was like, okay, not sure what to expect in Arkansas, but I'm going to visit my sister and check out this new spot. And she's like, oh yeah, when are you coming? I give her my dates and she's like, oh yeah, The Roots are performing here. You want me to get his tickets? I'm like, yes, please. And then she's like, oh yeah. Later in the year, we have the Wu-Tang Clan coming through. And Snoop Dogg is coming through. I was like, I never would have imagined that a move from New Jersey to Arkansas would have increased your proximity to hip hop concerts, but I am here for it. Get those tickets. And we did, and we went to the show, and it was amazing.

Akua Sencherey: So cool. Is it the Walmart connection? Does Walmart just pull in so many people?

Matt Bowles: They have just built a city that has a world-class art museum. There was a Diego Rivera exhibit there when I was there. I mean, it was just like The Roots were performing. I mean, it was like, where am I and what is even happening? Like, Oh yeah. And we're going to turn this town into the mountain biking capital of the United States. So, people come from all over the country to mountain bike in Bentonville. Like there's all of this stuff going on. It is really a wild and interesting place. My sister does not work for Walmart, but she works for a company that sells to Walmart. And so, she is there. Sort of in that ecosystem, which is why she moved there from New Jersey, but it was a very interesting place for sure. The Roots were as amazing as you imagined that they would be. So that was very special. Akua, I want you to let folks know how they can find you, and how they can follow you on social media.

What are you up to? What are you writing about these days? How would you like people to come into your world?

Akua Sencherey: Yes. You can always follow me on [Instagram](#). When I'm trying to be on the internet, I am on the internet. So, you'll see where I'm at, what I'm doing, different reels, different stories, things like that. That's @akua_noq, which means no Q, cause my name does not have a Q in it. That's where I am on [Instagram](#).

And I am building a bit of a content space for myself to freely write a bit more talking about what my travels mean to me. I want to process these past, since 2018, all this travel, and I want to start processing it in writing form. So, all of that will start to be compiled together this year. The focus for me in terms of content is on tech in Africa. It's about remote work and travel since I've actively been doing it. And it's about as well, the history of the culture, the things I'm learning on the road. So, where you can find that always is [akuasencherey.com](#). That'll always drive you to where you can see those links to my content. That'll drive you to a bit more of my portfolio and more of a sub stack and content space for everything is coming soon. But [akuasencherey.com](#), that's where you can find me on the internet.

Matt Bowles: We are going to link all of that up in [the show notes](#).

So, you can just go to one place at themaverickshow.com. Go to the show notes for this episode, there you will find the link to Akua's website, social media handles, and direct links to everything she has recommended, and everything we have discussed, it's all going to be at themaverickshow.com in [the show notes](#) for this episode.

Akua, I think you are amazing. And I want to thank you for coming on the show. This was amazing.

Akua Sencherey: Thank you. And I am so honored to have had this time with you. Thank you for the thoughtful conversation and the dialogue. I've really enjoyed this time. Thank you.

Matt Bowles: All right. Good night, everybody.