

**Matt Bowles:** My guest today is Ebonie Finley. She is a filmmaker, snowboarder, world traveler, and she works remotely as the sponsorship manager for [Safety Wing](#), which offers travel medical insurance for digital nomads that covers you for extended travel all over the world while outside your home country. Ebonie is also the founder of [Nomad Productions](#) and the director and producer of the documentary short film [Night Riders](#), the first, first ever snowboard movie shot entirely in the dark in the backcountry side of Quebec. She is also the creator of [Nomad Generation](#), a travel series that has generated over 3 million views. Originally from Montreal, Canada, Ebonie has been a full-time digital nomad since 2017.

Ebonie, welcome to the show.

**Ebonie Finley:** Thank you so much for having me. What a lovely intro.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, you deserve a wonderful introduction. You are doing amazing things, which I'm super excited to dive into on this interview. But let's just start off by setting the scene and talking about where we are recording from today. We are not in person. I am actually in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina today on the east coast of the U.S. and where are you?

**Ebonie Finley:** I am what I consider home. I'm an hour away from Montreal in Canada.

**Matt Bowles:** Listen, we've got to talk about Montreal. I feel like a lot of people don't know about Montreal. I actually had never been to Montreal until probably about five years ago. I had been to Toronto a lot because I went to high school in Buffalo, New York, right on the border near Niagara Falls. And I was going up to Niagara Falls and then up to Hamilton and then up to Toronto.

And so, like that whole section I knew very well. I'd never been to Montreal though. And then five years ago I went for the first time. Blew me away. And I have been telling everybody about it since.

But for you, can you share a little bit with people about what you love about Montreal? And for people that have never been, what would you recommend? How should people experience Montreal when they come?

**Ebonie Finley:** Montreal has my heart, honestly. It is undoubtedly for me the best city of Canada. First of all, it's the most affordable one still. Toronto, Vancouver, all the other like big cities have these crazy, out of control cost of living nowadays. And Montreal is still very much. You can find a really nice place for under 2k a month. It also has like the most restaurants per capita.

But in all of Canada, it's a foodiest town. It's European meets Latin. It's vibrant, it's diverse, it's colorful, it's fun. I would recommend coming in the summer to experience Picnic Electronique. That's like a festival that's going on every single weekend on our private party island. We call it the Party Island. It's awesome, it's dope.

We have the Poutine Fest, the jazz festival, the African Night Festival. There's like a festival going on every single week in the summer. So that's absolutely great. And then if you rent a car and you go just outside of Montreal, the nature is amazing.

As I mentioned, I live an hour away. I live in Saint Sauveur, it's a ski resort and I'm surrounded by mountains. I have trails over trails, over trails. I have secret waterfalls that are like 15 minutes away from my house. And then if I want to go to a party in Montreal and have the time of my life, it's only 40 minutes away. So, I think that it's all of that combined together that makes it just one of the best places to live.

And also, there's this reputation that if you don't speak French, you're not going to be accepted near Montreal. Like, I don't know if you can talk about that, but completely false. My boyfriend is from the UK. He does not speak a word of French and he has fallen in love with Montreal. Like, he loves it. He has a blast. Every weekend we're in Montreal, trying a different restaurant, going to a festival, like living our best life and speaking English has never been an issue.

**Matt Bowles:** I found that actually to be a really interesting aspect of Montreal is that it is a truly bilingual city. Meaning that if you speak only English and not a word of French, you will be fine. Also, if you speak only French and not a word of English, you will also be completely fine. And you can thrive in this city. I mean, it is a genuinely bilingual city.

**Ebonie Finley:** I completely agree. If you go to Quebec City, a lot of people don't see the difference between Quebec and Quebec Cities. Right. So, Quebec is the province, and then we have Quebec City. If you go to Quebec City, not going to lie. Very proud to be francophone. Some people will deliberately answer to you in French if you're trying to speak to them in English. But not in Montreal. That will never happen.

And that's also a really cool place to visit. I mean, if you can steer away from the French English thing, like, the Chateau Frontenac is beautiful over there. They also have Les Plaines d'Abraham, all sorts of festivals. It's Poutine. Like, you can't come here and not have Poutine, of course. So highly recommend. But yes, Quebec City is a little bit more French, but Montreal, you'll never have a problem.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want to talk a little bit about your experience growing up there. But before we talk about your story, I'd love for you to share a little bit about your background and maybe start off sharing your mother's story about where she is from and how she got to Canada.

**Ebonie Finley:** So, my mom is originally from Bahamas. Her family island is Andros Mangrove Cay. We all have family islands in the Bahamas. I grew up between Quebec, like the harsh winters of Quebec, and then the beautiful white sand beaches of Bahamas.

The reason why my mom decided to leave paradise is because she found love here with my dad. She came to party on St. Denis because again, Montreal is the place to party.

In Canada if you want to party hard, Montreal is where you want to go. So, she came here years ago to party with her sisters all the way from Bahamas. And my dad saw her, and he was like, holy crap. This is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen in my whole entire life. Are you kidding me? They fell in love, they went to Bahamas together, decided they wanted to have a family, and because Canada offers more opportunities when it comes to work and lifestyle, they decided they would move here.

So, my mom agreed she would trade the white sand beaches for the horrible winters here. It depends on who you are. I actually like the winters, but we can get into that later. But, yeah, she moved here, and she learned French, and we've just been in this in between all of my childhood of I identify as a Quebecer Bahamian. It's weird. I've never met another Quebecer Bahamian, but that's my heritage.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you share a little bit about Navigating that identity, growing up there and what that was like for you.

**Ebonie Finley:** It was really difficult. I'm not going to lie. I grew up not in Montreal, so an hour away in the suburbs, a little place called Repentigny. I was the first little girl of color in my school, my brother being the second. This was 30 years ago. So, I think there's a lot of education that has been done ever since.

But back then, it was really difficult. When people would see my dad, who looks like you, like a white guy, you know, they would immediately assume that we are adopted. They would never think that we are his children. And that would really insult him to the point where my teacher, when she first met my dad, was like, congratulations, your kids are from Africa.

So, my dad was really upset. He changed classes for me, changed teachers, everything. So, it was really hard. I never felt like I fully belong anywhere, right, because the white people were calling me black, when really, I'm not actually black. Like, I'm mixed. But when I would go to Bahamas, I'm also not black. I am 100% mixed to them, and I speak French, and I'm a Quebecker.

So that's been really, really difficult growing up. And I've really learned to embrace my difference and my unique cultural heritage as I grew older. But as a child, that was challenging.

**Matt Bowles:** What was your experience like going back to the Bahamas as a kid? And what was that identity connection like for you growing up?

**Ebonie Finley:** It definitely felt like we didn't belong culturally. Bahamian people have slangs. They have, you know, like, their typical food, their typical culture and all of that. And we were typically Quebecois, but black, so it was just hard to make friends. It was hard to identify. It was hard to connect with the local people that were our family. But they just didn't see us always as one of their own.

So, we've had to learn to accept that we're not them, we're not Quebecker. We're like a mix of everything. And we actually had to say it at a certain point. Like, when my brother got married, my family from Bahamas came over to the wedding, and they were saying little comments sometimes about like, yeah, but you guys are not black, or, yeah, but you guys are not Bahamians, or you don't know this because you're not Bahamian.

And we actually had to, like, put an end to it and be like, yeah, we know we're not fully Bahamian, but this is still part of our heritage. And we would appreciate if you would stop pointing out the fact that we're not fully Bahamian. Like, we're proud that we are a mix of all these different cultures and heritage, and there's nothing wrong with that. Luckily, it has stopped, but we had to voice it for it to, I think, be heard and acknowledged.

**Matt Bowles:** And can you talk a little bit more also about the Quebecker side of your identity? And just for people that are not familiar with the Quebecois dynamics and how that is in some ways distinct from a broader Canadian identity, can you share some of that context and then also how your personal identity manifested?

**Ebonie Finley:** Yes. I think a general consensus that I've seen traveling the world is that Quebecers always present themselves as Quebecers, and the rest of Canada present themselves as Canadians. Like, no matter where they are from, they're like, hi, I'm Canadians, where Quebecers are very nationalistic, and they're very like, I'm Quebecker. Do you get me? It's not like I'm Canadian, even though we are it's I'm Quebecker first, Canadian second.

So that really creates that kind of little independent bubble. We are different for that, in the sense that we speak French. We're very bilingual. I think we're really different culturally, too.

I really see Toronto as, like, the business center of Canada. I see the west coast as the chill, typical Canadians that you would think of. And then Quebecers, again, were in our different category. We're like

the European Barcelona party meets Latin Costa Rica. Hot blood. Very opinionated, very loud, very out there. And, like, you can be who you want to be in Montreal.

So, I said it earlier. I feel like it's almost an unsaid little war, like the snowboarder skiers. I feel like it's the same Quebecer Canadians. It's not a war, but it's definitely like, you know, that you're different or that you stand out when you're Quebecer. You don't identify straight away as a Canadian. You're a Quebecer.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want to ask you also about how your interest in world travel outside of the Bahamas and Canada started to develop as you were growing up. Can you share a little bit about that?

**Ebonie Finley:** I was just, I need to see something else. And I got into modeling, and when I started to get into modeling, I got there into a time where girls of colors were not really celebrated. So, I had to move basically to South Africa to find work. And that's where my love for travel really ignited.

I was like, oh, my God, this world is huge. There's so much more than the Bahamas. This is amazing. I think that my mom was also a traveler, coming to Montreal to party and this and that. She kind of installed that in us. That, like, the world is our playground. You know, you don't have to stay in one place, go and explore.

But because her family was there, we would always go back to the Bahamas. And I was just like, wow, I'm bored. Like, I need to see something else. So, modeling really opened those doors of giving me an opportunity to travel and see other things. And then I just wanted to do it on my own.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you share a little bit about your modeling career and some of the lessons and reflections from that? Because I know you did that for over a decade, and I know that you had a lot of experiences that helped to shape your understanding and critique and an analysis of racial and gender and capitalist dynamics that are so present in that industry. But can you share a little bit about that and then how that shaped your worldview?

**Ebonie Finley:** What really shifted was when I was on [Canada's Next Top Model](#), I was on season three of [Canada's Next Top Model](#). And honestly, I would not wish for my worst enemy to ever experience anything like that. It was by far one of the most horrendous experiences of my life.

I genuinely thought that this was going to propulse my modeling career and I was going to get exposure and opportunities, and I was really dreaming big. And turns out that this was just a bunch of producers trying to, like, really almost, like, take advantage of young little girls to get views and to make it clickbait, create drama.

There was not a lot of law and legislation around editing. So, there's a lot of things that were edited to make us look. Look really, really bad. And when I came out of the show, I was cyber bullied a lot. There was even a Facebook page. There were two, actually, that I remember. One was called I hate Ebonie. Like just I hate Ebonie. And the other one was Ebonie is a transsexual person. And it was just really difficult, all the critique. I was tiny. I was size zero. And I'll never forget being told by major people in the industry that I needed to be on an apple and diet water. That if they don't smell barf breath on me, I'm not doing XYZ fashion show.

Just things that will leave scars and bring trauma, I think, to pretty much anyone. So, it really shaped me in the sense that I realized that I didn't want to participate in that industry anymore. It just did not make sense to. I was 16. I was on the covers of magazines selling anti-wrinkle creams. I'm 16. Of course I don't have any wrinkles. I'm 36 now, and I barely have wrinkles because blacks don't crack.

But you know what I mean? Like, it was insane. I was 20. I was selling wedding dresses that were like size zero to regular women who are about to get married and their regular human women that eat, they're not going to be a size 0. They're going to be a size 8 or 10 or 12 or whatever size perfect and beautiful.

So, all of that just led me to realize, like, I don't want to participate in this anymore. I'm literally just a face to an industry that I hate. So why would I continue pursuing that?

And after [Canada's Next Top Model](#) and the bullying, the moving to South Africa was amazing for traveling. However, the racism was really hardcore there. Like, whenever I would do castings, it was very colored girls over here, black girls over here, Caucasian girls over there. Like, I had never experienced that.

So, I just wanted out. I basically wanted a voice, and I wanted to not encourage gross men who are selling impossible, unachievable beauty standard to women. Like, it just did not make sense to me anymore.

**Matt Bowles:** So how did you transition out of that industry and what was your career path leading up to your transition into the digital nomad life?

**Ebonie Finley:** It was parallel. So, there was a part of me when I finished modeling, I was 24, which back then I used to think was like, oh, my God, oh, so late to start a bachelor's degree in my education, because all my friends had started in their 20s.

So, there was a part of me that was, I wanted to find my voice, and I want to use my voice for something that I believe in, and I really believe in traveling, and I really believe that traveling is the school of life. But then at the same time, I also had all these external pressures of, like, what are you going to do with your life? You need education, you need something that's going to back you up, and you need a career, and blah, blah, blah.

So, these two things kind of lived in parallel. I decided I would go do a bachelor's degree in marketing, and I decided I would work on my voice at the same time. And through that, I had a lot of opportunities to travel on my own for fun, which further reinforced how this is really okay. I kind of want to build my lifestyle and my life around this.

As I was traveling and going to school and everything, I met my first real life digital nomads, and I became obsessed with them. I was just like, oh, my God, there are people out there who are traveling the world and doing it all year round. Like, how do they do it? And at the same time as all of this, I have school that's like, you need to find a job. And I have a horrendous ex-boyfriend. His whole thing was stop living in a world, a fairy world of unicorns and pink glasses where, like, people travel all the time. That's impossible. It will never happen.

And it infuriated me, and he was putting a lot of pressure on me to finish school. Let's get pregnant, let's buy a house, let's have a dog. And that would literally give me nightmares. All of that combined together with the fact that my whole four years in university were mentally the most difficult of my life.

I was a diagnosed insomniac. My level of anxiety and stress had never been that high. And the only reliefs would find was when I was traveling or when I was trying to build something around traveling and meeting these other inspiring people.

So, when I finished my bachelor's degree, it was just a break in point. I broke up with him. I quit the job, and I was like, I'm going to travel and somehow make my life like this or around this.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, one of the things that you ended up doing is that you wound up on [The Amazing Race Canada](#). And I have to ask you about that. For people that have never heard of [The Amazing Race](#), can you just share a little bit about what it is, the context, and then what your experience was like?

**Ebonie Finley:** Yes. Oh, my God. [The Amazing Race](#), on the flip side of [Canada's Next Top Model](#) was the best experience. It was so much fun and I'm so happy I did it. It's a race mainly in Canada, but also, they take you to different destinations around the world. You're in teams of two pairs. You can be best friends, couples, mom, daughter, whatever. Just in pairs. And the first team to reach the final destination wins a around the world ticket, which that's what I wanted. A quarter of a million dollars and [The Amazing Race](#) title.

So, me and my best friend, when we saw that, like there was casting for [The Amazing Race](#), we just could not pass on that. And little inside scoop. Turns out that it was the same producer that was on [The Amazing Race](#) that was on [Canada's Next Top Model](#). And I got the chance to confront him about how I got bullied on [Canada's Next Top Model](#). And I was using [The Amazing Race](#) as an opportunity to redeem myself and make peace with TV reality and the image that they gave me and that I wanted to be in control of the narratives this time.

And he was. I completely agree with you. I'm so sorry for what you have been through, and I hope [The Amazing Race](#) is, like the best experience for you. And it was. It was absolutely dope. I met so many cool people during that show too. Like, this is the behind the scenes that no one sees but the camera guys, the sound operators, the nannies, just the crew. Most of them were also nomads.

So, this was so inspiring for me to see these people that are working in film and television and traveling the world and doing their passion. And I'm there with my best friend and we're doing that. And it was just, oh, my God. If you're thinking of doing [The Amazing Race](#), do it.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you describe what it actually is? Like, what do you do in [The Amazing Race](#)? What are the challenges like? Take us inside that. As a participant, what exactly did you experience?

**Ebonie Finley:** Yeah, you actually race. This is the part, like, it's not fake. You have to self-drive to your next challenge. Your challenge could be anything or everything. This is the part where you really don't know what you signed up for until you're actually there.

I had to tightrope between the highest buildings in Vancouver, for example, and I am terrified of heights. I hyperventilated the whole entire time. That was really scary. But then there's also really other fun little challenges like building a flower stand. And the first team that builds the flower stand gets to move on to the next challenge.

And then the next challenge would be to bike around cones and make five goals against another team. And some challenges are really fun. Some challenges are gross and scary and will take you outside of your comfort zone. But it's all challenges and it's a race. So, the last team to get to the next challenge is usually eliminated.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask you about how your interest in film production and direction developed and maybe share a little bit about that story in the context of what led up to the production of your travel series, [Nomad Generation](#).

**Ebonie Finley:** Yeah, I've always been interested in TV and shows and obviously being able to participate myself in TV reality and seeing all the back end, that kind of sparked my interest even more.

As I mentioned earlier, I was trying to find my voice. I think that being a model and not being able to talk, just being a be pretty and shut up kind of job led me to want to explore having that voice even more. And dare I say, even, like, be loud, right? Not just be like, oh, I Find my voice in that career. Like, I wanted to be heard really badly just because for so many years I wasn't heard.

And I wanted to step away as far as I could from that. I like having creative liberty. I love being able to inspire people, change people's lives, maybe even bring emotions to people. And I remember that when I decided to do [Nomad Generation](#), my goal in having that voice was, I don't want anyone else to ever feel the way that I felt stuck.

I remember I was in that relationship; I was stuck. Like, I didn't know how to travel. What job am I going to do? Are these remote jobs even real? Does this exist? How do these people do it? How do you make money? Can you have a house? How does Visa works? All these questions that were just driving me nuts. I was just like; I never want anyone else to be in that situation and to know that there's no options for them.

So let me be loud, let me be vocal. Let me tell the world that this is possible. Because if someone like me, who's been told all my life that it's impossible is doing it, then anyone can do it. And I want the world to see that. And I just knew that the best way for me to do it was through television. It's just natural for me. I'm not uncomfortable in front of cameras. I actually love it. I could be creative, express myself. So, I was like, yeah, I'm doing this.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you talk a little bit about the actual scope of the project itself? You have this idea, you have this vision, you have this passion. You want to do it. How did you get the funding to do it? And then where did you go? Can you share some of the locations and some of the stories and people that you interviewed?

**Ebonie Finley:** Yes, of course. So, I had no idea this was going to blow up. At first. I was honestly just doing this to answer my own questions and then share the answers that I would get with the world. Right. So, the series is in French, Quebecers, you know, the nationalistic.

I was like, I'm going for my Quebecers Nomad first. I mean, I had never had a production house. I had no idea how any of that worked intuitively. I just thought, okay, I'm going to be traveling around the world to places that are really inaccessible and difficult for most brands to reach.

So, what if these brands, I could create content for them on the spot, and they gave me money, and I used that money to fund the show. And that's literally the definition of brand. Partnership, sponsorship, influence, marketing.

I just had no idea back then that it was what I was doing, but that's what I did. I created what is now called a pitch deck, but not knowing that it was a pitch deck. But I created a pitch deck. I took the most influential Quebecers nomads that I could find, asked them for their numbers, their views, their marketing, basic social media.

In my pitch deck show that to companies be like, I'm going to produce this show with this influencer. You're going to get 100,000 views if you only give me \$10,000. And I'm going to have a camera guy on the spot so I

can make videos for you in Cambodia, if you were to send a crew there, that would cost you \$100,000, but I'm going to do some content for you for only 10,000 and get you a hundred thousand views.

Matthew. I don't know why these people trusted me, but they did. I had major brands give me money. I didn't even have an Instagram. That's how little I knew about influence marketing, about what the hell I was doing. But they trusted me. They gave me the money. I hired a camera guy, I hired a sound guy, I hired an editor, a graphic designer, and we just left, and we did it.

We went to Vancouver, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Bahamas. But this was really cool because I did it on a sailboat and I had never explored the Bahamas through boating. So that was really different and really fun. Bali, Cambodia, I said, so, like, there's six episodes in total, had a blast. And everyone was happy. We launched it on the web. No expectation other than the influencers will reshare it. And organically we generated 3 million views.

So, the sponsors were like, this was a bargain. This was epic. They got awesome content, all the views they wanted. I got the money to fund this show, which I was like, oh, my God, I can rinse and repeat this formula, like, this worked. I can do this again. And that's how I was like, okay, I can actually produce independent projects with sponsors. And that's how I got into sponsorship.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, they are really beautifully shot episodes. And just to clarify for folks, when you say that they are in French, they also have English subtitles on them, so you can go and watch them the same way you'd watch any film with subtitles on it, so it is accessible to everyone to watch, and it is free and available. And we will link that up in the show notes for sure.

When you think back on that project and you think about where you were personally in your nomad journey when you were doing that project, what are some of the lessons and reflections you had from some of the people that you met and some of the conversations and the interviews that you did? What did you learn from that project?

**Ebonie Finley:** Honestly, I would not be the same nomad if it wasn't for [Nomad Generation](#). And this is where it really changed my life. Like when I say it changed my life, it's really not about the 3 million views. It's about the people that I met, the conversations that I had and what I've learned.

So, the first thing that I've learned is not that I've learned, but I've really solidified for myself is that I believe that we are meant to do so much more than just pay your bills, go to work, rinse, repeat. Life is happening now. Life is meant to be lived. I want to live and not survive.

And I want to live now like I don't want to wait until I'm retired, and my knees hurt, and I have kids or whatever to travel the world. I want to do this now. And the only way to do it now is by creating that freedom in your life. Because if you're stuck in a 40-hour work week in your little routine and you have two weeks of vacation per year, it's going to be really, really hard to kind of create that lifestyle and that freedom for you.

So that was really cemented in my mind. I already knew that the typical nine to five wasn't for me. And don't get me wrong, I work super hard. Sometimes I work more than 9 to 5, but I'm so passionate about what I do that it doesn't feel like work. Like I don't feel like I'm working. I still feel like I'm enjoying my life and I'm living and I'm like, I'm in Mexico jumping in a cenote in my lunch break.



It doesn't mean that I don't believe in work or society. It's just that I don't believe in the very confined, go into the office, nine to five, two-week vacation. That just doesn't allow for the freedom to travel the world.

Then I thought there was this very typical path to being a nomad. And I had these very stereotypical ideas about what it is to be a nomad. And doing these interviews and meeting all these nomads led me to realize how every road leads to Rome. There is not one single correct way to do this. It really doesn't actually also matter how you choose to do this whatever works for you.

Again, why would we even put a box around it? It's so atypical to begin with, so I'm guilty of it. I used to think like, you can't have a house, you must travel XYZ amount of time. You have to make XYZ amount of money. And then I'm meeting champagne nomads. I'm meeting slowmads, I'm meeting stamp collectors, I'm meeting people who are traveling winters only would call them snowbirds, but they're like, no, I'm a digital nomad. They work their butt off and then all winter they travel.

And so many different stories that I was like, there's actually absolutely no right or wrong way of doing this. You just have to find whatever works for you and it's a work in progress and it can change and evolve with time. And there is no set minimum salary. You need to make the minimum amount of countries you need to visit to be like, oh, I can claim I'm a digital nomad.

I visited 50 countries. No, scrap that. It's all BS in my mind. Yeah. It was just really inspiring, and it led me to believe that I could just carve my own way. And that's what I've been trying to do.

**Matt Bowles:** Yeah, I mean, I think the more nomads you meet, the more you realize that there's all different ways to do this lifestyle, all different paths to becoming a nomad, all different techniques and mechanisms and strategies for sustaining this lifestyle in a way that's exciting and joyful and fulfilling for you personally, which is not necessarily the same as the next person that you're going to meet and so on and so forth.

So, yeah, I think the longer you're in this lifestyle, the more you realize that there's a ton of different options. And for me, it's really very much about location independence and just having that choice. Right. Because it's not like one prescription is the correct one for every single human, but the more freedom of choice that you have to design your ideal lifestyle and the way you choose to design your lifestyle can change over time also.

So, at one season of your life, the optimal lifestyle might be one particular thing, and then at another season of your life, the optimal lifestyle for you personally might change and then it might change back and then it might keep moving. And as long as you have the most freedom possible to keep making those choices. I mean, for me, I think that's what it's all about.

**Ebonie Finley:** Exactly.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want to also talk to you about the progression of your film making career. You directed and produced a documentary short film called [Night Riders](#), which is the first ever snowboard movie shot entirely in the dark in the backcountry of Quebec. And this film, when I watched it, I mean, it is a gorgeously shot film.

But before we dive into that film, I would love to roll the tape back a little bit and get a little bit of your background as a snowboarder, what some of your snowboarding experiences have been, and then what that identity has meant in your life as a snowboarder.

**Ebonie Finley:** Yes, I got into snowboarding really late in my life, 25. But I thought snowboarders were really hot. So, I was like, if I want to date a snowboarder, I need to learn to snowboard myself. That was one reason.

Then the second reason is my mom hates winter. And she was very vocal about not liking the Canadian winters. And the older I was getting, the more I was realizing, obviously if you're doing nothing, if you're just staying inside and doing nothing and complaining about the winter, it's going to be horrible. But if you actually find amazing outdoors activities that you can do in the winter, you're going to enjoy it so much more.

So, these two arguments were sufficient for me to be like, I'm going to be a snowboarder. This is awesome. So, I started snowboarding. I was traveling to Whistler for the first time in my life. And who the hell starts in Whistler? Well, me. It was really, really difficult. I realized really quickly it was not going to be sustainable.

So, I came back here, took some lessons, and then I met my ex-boyfriend, which is a pro snowboarder in Whistler, and I moved to Whistler. I actually lived in Whistler for almost two years. And he completely changed my life when it came to snowboarding. Like, he would take me to the most insane places in the backcountry where we would have fresh powder all day, all to ourselves.

And my goal was to not lose him. Like, he's a pro snowboarder, he is fast, and when he snowboards with his friends, it's even faster. And there's this macho little, you know, like, I'm not going to slow down for a girl or whatever. So, like, I just wanted to keep up with them. And I became really good. Everyone in Whistler welcomed me with open arms.

However, when I reached a point where I was really good, whenever I would take out my goggles and people would notice that I am black, they would really be surprised. And often they would say something. They would say something like, oh, I didn't realize, and I'd be like, realize what? And, oh, nothing it's just I didn't think you, okay, cool. Like, I knew what they meant. I knew that, like, I was the black sheep.

I was pretty much the only black girl in Whistler also. So, I kind of wanted to make it a point that this sport should be accessible to everyone. I genuinely don't understand why diversity are not more present in skiing and snowboarding in Whistler, anyways. So that led me to want to create Night Riders at night.

Also, there's a lot less people, so it's almost, like, easier when you're riding at night. And because my ex would take me to the backcountry, the moon would always light up all the mountains, and we would literally snowboard pow at night with only the moon as our guides. And that was so magical that I was like, I need to find a way to recreate that at night. No one sees your skin color. No one sees who you are.

So, it was a combination of all of that that led me to create [Night Riders](#). I wanted to promote diversity in sport. I wanted to promote something that was different and difficult and equal for everyone, because colors don't exist at night. So, [Night Riders](#).

**Matt Bowles:** Let's talk about this film. First of all, it is gorgeously shot. I mean, I want to recommend that everyone go watch this. We're going to link it up in [the show notes](#). It's a short film. It's only about 12 minutes or so, and I want to recommend that everybody go look at it.

But I have to say, I was so. I'm just going to say, pleasantly surprised by the fact that also in this film, you made me laugh out loud at the.

**Ebonie Finley:** What? Really?

**Matt Bowles:** Yes. I'm going to give a spoiler, I guess. But at the beginning, you open it up with this dude who's making a phone call to the police station, and he's like, yeah, I'd like to report that it looks like there's aliens on the mountain. And then you pan up and you guys are like, have headlamps on. It's pitch dark. And there's a whole crew of you, like, snowboarding, flying down the mountain. And there's this dude on the phone with the police. Like, yeah, I'd like to report that there's aliens on the mountain.

And then at the very end of the film, it cuts back to him in the conversation. It's like, yeah, no, there's just people filming a movie. And then he says, talking to his wife, oh, there's people just filming a movie. It's not aliens. It's okay. I was laughing out loud by myself watching this.

**Ebonie Finley:** I want to shout out, Moment Factory. I teamed up with them on this movie because I wanted it to be visually interesting. Because technically, if you think about it, like, I gave myself a really big technical challenge to shoot in the dark. Like, can you imagine snowboarding in the dark? But then filming it and showing it to an audience like that was really technically difficult.

So, Moment Factory teamed up with me, and they were like, okay, we're going to use headlamps or lamps that you can hold in your hand so that you can light your own way and your own path. But this has never been done. And Gaspésie is a small little village. It's the kind of village where everyone knows each other. I don't know how to explain it. And there must be, like, 500 people in this tiny little village.

So obviously, for us to come there with a filming crew and then have these big lights in the mountain. It was like 2:00am in the mountain. I completely understand why they called the police. It must have been so unsettling for them to watch that. And they must have been like, what the hell is going on? They had no idea. But thank you. I'm really happy that it came out nice like that and that we left a strong impression in.

**Matt Bowles:** Yes, absolutely. So, we're going to link that up in [the show notes](#) as well as your travel series, [Nomad Generation](#), so folks can watch both of those for free. Just go to [themaverickshow.com](#). Go to [the show notes](#) for this episode, and there you'll find direct links to check those out. Highly recommended it.

All right, we're going to pause here and call that the end of part one. If you want to find, follow and connect with Ebonie, her contact info is going to be in [the show notes](#) along with direct links to everything we have discussed in this episode. Just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#). Go to [the show notes](#) for this episode and be sure to tune in to the next episode to hear the conclusion of my interview with Ebonie Finley.

Good night, everybody.