

Blaxit Tribe: Black & Living Abroad

Living the Expat Life with Faye Tillery

by **Alexis Collins**

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The worldwide grassroots movement that arose last summer in defiance of systemic racism and police brutality, nurtured the concentration of Black innovation and Black Americans exiting America to move abroad. In the early 1900s, Marcus Garvey urged African Americans to embrace their roots, tirelessly advocating for Black nationalism and pan-Africanism. These movements called for people in the diaspora to return and rebuild in Africa, with Black self-reliance; independence; and pride being a core part of his teachings.

Renowned author and orator James Baldwin, also expressed sentiments for Black Americans to relocate, stating in a 1961 interview that “to be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.” He later sought refuge in France to escape the tyranny of systemic racism and the heinous violence America has inflicted on its melanated citizens for centuries. Richard Wright, Josephine Baker, Nina Simone, and countless other African Americans followed suit. Years later, for many American descendants of slaves, the desire to escape brutality, economic burdens, and oppression hasn’t changed.

If anything, the resounding alarm for Black international relocation has only grown stronger, given the murders of Trayvon Martin, Eric Gardner, Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Elijah McCain, Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Aubrey, and George Floyd.

More Black Americans are living abroad

The rising number of frustrated U.S.-based Black people have created expat groups to permanently move abroad; Faye Tillery, content creator and founder of the Facebook Group, Blaxit Tribe: Black Americans Who Want to Exit the US and Move Abroad, is one of them. The driving forces behind her decision were her and her late mother’s dreams to retire

overseas, coupled with the corporate microaggressions she endured as an entertainment attorney.

“It was always discouraging to never be able to travel when I wanted. Fast forward and my mother got really sick, and it was her goal to travel when she retired. She passed away at 57 and I thought if I am indeed following in her shoes, in 20 years that will be me,” she explained. “I thought I can’t wait; she missed her moment, so I was going to go for the both of us. So, I quit my job and started traveling the world and it’s been the best experience of my life.”

Moving Abroad

Tillery consequentially **left** Los Angeles for Colombia in 2016 and later to Nairobi in 2018. Her virtual group has witnessed a rapid uptick in a mere span of eight months, increasing from 2,800 members to over 12,000 and counting.

There’s strength in numbers and the continued expansion of the group is promising, although Tillery’s primary focus has been helping more women to become location independent through digital entrepreneurship through her consulting firm, Someday Started Today, which paves the way for them to have a successful move abroad if they so choose.

“I am trying to bring more women into this space cause a lot of us get trapped either into a job where there is a glass ceiling and there shouldn’t be, or we want to stay home with our kids or travel the world,” she highlighted. “We need options that are available to us, so that’s why I am trying to share that message with women now.”

Black Americans “Go Back to Africa?”

For Black American travelers, the world is their oyster, and they definitely aren’t lacking in options, with nearly 200 countries and six continents to choose from. The main contenders for expatriation, however, are **African countries such as Ghana** and South Africa, which’s been advantageous in organizing a series of coordinated efforts to attract more brothers and sisters. One campaign includes U.S.-originated lifestyle platform Black and Abroad’s “Go Back to Africa” crusade, an award-winning targeted tourism strategy that derives its name from the longstanding racist retort aimed at Black Americans. In 2019, the founders found a way to put a positive spin on the derogatory phrase, encouraging African descendants to join their ranks.

Another successful operation carried out that same year was Ghana's immensely popular Year of the Return, commemorating the first enslaved West Africans who were brought to Jamestown, Virginia in 1619. Ghana's government extended an open invitation to displaced Africans, promising that they will receive a warm welcome home. There's been a renewed interest in residing in Ghana after its Minister of Tourism, Mrs. Barbara Oteng-Gyasi, reintroduced the idea after the murder of George Floyd and the reignited spark of social and political unrest brewing in the U.S.

Besides escaping the suffocating effects of a country that refuses to recognize its dark history and debilitating treatment of its marginalized population; Black Americans for the first time possess the unprecedented ability to generate generational wealth and economic opportunity. They can also thrive in a society that values them as human beings and doesn't judge them for the color of their skin, particularly in Africa where it's predominantly black. It's a refreshing reprieve from the generations of hatred and intolerance that has been sewn into the very fabric of their American experience.

Getting out of the Pandemic

Despite the pandemic putting an indefinite halt on travel plans, African Americans refuse to sit idly by while waiting another 60 years for reform to come. They want **change** now and are taking it upon themselves to find it. This Black empowerment momentum is reminiscent of the recent film, Judas and the Black Messiah, where Daniel Kaluuya who portrays Black Panther chairman Fred Hampton reenacts the prolific scene in which he firmly proclaims, "I am, a revolutionary!"

Tillery supports finding your personal freedom and conquering your own form of the American dream outside your country's borders, hoping that more Black Expats will come along. "You have to look at your life in two respects. You have those things that you love, and you have to merge your skill sets with the things you love," she advised. "I'm really happy people are getting the courage to move, and I think it's mainly because when you see other people do it, it inspires you and encourages you to do the same."