Have curiosity, will travel

KSU grad and ex-pat turns love of travel into consulting business

When Rukiya McNair walked across the stage to receive her bachelor’s degree in Pan African Studies from Kent State University in 2004, she knew the world was waiting for her to explore. She may not have known at the time that she would literally explore places far and near around the world – and make a life for herself and her family in those places around the world.

Her travels and life abroad led the Pittsburgh-area native, wife and mother of two to found Rukiya McNair Consulting, a firm offering travel and cultural workshops, personal travel consultations for those considering living abroad, a travel blog, and travel planning and organizing worksheets. McNair said she will soon add an online course component to her services in 2018.

Adjusting for the time difference between Northeast Ohio and Thailand, McNair took time to answer some questions about her company and her traveling life.

Black Flash: What was the trigger that gave you the spark to take the leap to move and to start your business?

Rukiya McNair: I started my travel consulting business about 2 months ago. I decided to transition from being a retail business owner to travel consulting simply because I love traveling and living abroad. I also enjoy answering the frequent questions I receive from aspiring expats and travelers!

BF: How are you able to keep up with the various requirements, documentation and other regulations associated with travel to so many countries?

RM: There are several online sources to keep up with the most recent changes around the globe. I also refer my clients to these websites as well for their visa needs when traveling or moving abroad.

BF: What countries have you lived in and visited so far?

RM: Combined, I have lived and traveled in about 10 countries as an adult. We have lived in Bali and Jakarta Indonesia, Bahrain, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Thailand. I have visited Jamaica, Bahamas, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Cambodia and Spain.
**BF:** How old are your children and were any of them born overseas during your travels?

**RM:** We have two children ages 6 and 8, they were both born in Washington, D.C.

**BF:** What has been the most challenging country to visit so far?

**RM:** This is a difficult question to answer because all countries have their challenges, however there is so much to experience and learn in each one!

**BF:** How do you feel you and your family have been welcomed by the citizens of nations with few or marginalized black populations? Likewise, how have countries with majority black populations welcomed you and your family as African-Americans?

**RM:** Every country is different, and every Black person’s personal experience in those countries will also vary. Generally speaking, we have been treated well in all of the countries we have been to or lived in. Having the blue passport (U.S. passport) is a privilege, and you can definitely feel it when you are abroad. Most places we have been we were treated as Americans first, regardless of the color of our skin. It’s something that takes time to get acclimated to, and I think that says a lot.

**BF:** How often do your return stateside and when do you plan to return stateside permanently?

**RM:** I can’t really say; it just depends on when we are ready to go home for a visit. When we were in Bali, we didn’t visit the entire two years we were living there. At this point, we do not plan on ever residing in the U.S. permanently.

To read more about McNair’s travels and her travel consulting services, visit [rukiyamcnair.com](http://rukiyamcnair.com).
UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, Nov. 18

Black Alumni Chapter Night Out at the African Community Theatre.
Dinner with the Black Alumni Chapter, 5 - 7 p.m. at the Black Iron Grille, 7291 State Route 43, Kent, Ohio 44240. Attendees are responsible for the purchase of their own food and beverages.
Performance of the Pan-African Theatre Ensemble’s Vejigantes (Devil Mask), 8 p.m. at the African Community Theatre, Oscar Ritchie Hall, room 230 and an informal discussion with the director and cast following the show.
Plans for year-long BUS 50th anniversary celebration

Alumni, students invited to share ideas

After the parade, tailgating, cheering on the Golden Flashes football team and alumni parties, some KSU Black alumni and campus members also gathered homecoming weekend to pay homage to a group of brave students who formed Black United Students in 1968.

Black alumni from baby boomers to millennials met not only to honor the founding of BUS, but to get a head start on commemorating the organization’s upcoming 50th anniversary. BUS was established as an official student organization in April 1968, as African American students began to demand courses and programming that reflected the Black experience and the contributions that people of African descent made to the world.

In November of 1968, BUS members walked out of classes en masse to protest a lack of representation on campus. As a result of the walk-out and negotiations that followed, the students eventually succeeded in establishing the Institute for African-American Affairs in 1969, the Center for Pan-African Culture in 1970 and the Department of Pan-African Studies in 1976.

Alumni and university representatives met over homecoming weekend to begin conversations and planning to commemorate the 50th anniversary of BUS in a year-long celebration. Conversations centered around key dates and types of celebratory events, starting in April 2018 and commencing during homecoming 2018.

The organizers are still seeking input from alumni and students on things like:

- Concerts
- Scholarship benefit breakfast, lunch or dinner
- Cookout/Picnic
- Day of Service
- Speaker series (particularly BUS historians)
- Silent Auction
- 5K walk/run or other sporting event

For updates and to participate in the 50th anniversary commemoration planning, write to Cinnamon Small, President, Black Alumni Chapter, csmall@kent.edu.
Meet the officers of the Black Alumni Chapter of the Kent State University Alumni Association

The 2017-2018 Black Alumni chapter board members and their roles. We’re proud to serve you!

Cinnamon Small (‘09, ’13), President
Outreach Coordinator, Kent State University Department of Pan African Studies

Kenneth Atchinson (‘89), Vice President
Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Baldwin Wallace University

Terri Shavers (‘92, ’11), Fundraising, Scholarship & Student Recruitment
Forensic Clinical Supervisor, Community Support Services

Director of Rehabilitation Services, Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare and Adjunct Nursing Clinical Instructor, Kent State University

Kellea Tibbs (‘97) Special Events – Homecoming, Alumni Networking & Membership
Assistant Director for Campus Relations, Ohio University Alumni Association