



ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Podcast Transcript

Diasporas II: Belonging

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ZAINABU JALLO: Now that we've explored what a diaspora is, let's hear what it feels like to live in one. In this next part, you'll step into a personal story, one shaped by identity, connection, and the search for home.

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IRENE GARCIA: I'm Irene Garcia. I'm a student in the Master in African Studies. I'm from Spain and have lived in four different countries for the past 20 years. The idea of diaspora offers the opportunity to reflect about the notion of home and how it materialises: to ask oneself, what it means to be in diaspora and to be at home.

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I would say that it's a state of awareness. Diaspora carries a level of suffering, but also some agency. Sometimes they alternate, sometimes they follow or intersect. It is a space or a way to look into the world where multiple realities may coexist.

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I guess diaspora begins for me when I was first confronted with the idea of being the other when living abroad, which triggered an intellectual inquiry about identity. I often felt like I need to make ten times more effort than locals to be tolerated, to be seen for who I am, to deserve an opportunity for belonging. And this can be very exhausting. I've had many physical homes in the past years in four different countries, and yet I was not always able to find home in those physical places.

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In my own story, I experienced how home may have been not just a physical space, but also a person, music, a meal, books, films; a memory or a state of being, or multiple versions of them overlapping in time. With time, you understand that diaspora offers you a certain level of agency through the possibility of shaping your own idea of home. Diaspora can be understood as an act of liberation from all these expectations through the choice of a path of yours.



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I have come to understand that diaspora is not just a fixed state, but one in constant fluctuation, transformation and in the making, which makes it tremendously and reaching. When we are in diaspora and nurture this awareness, we can converge in this in-between space with many others who may be seeking for something similar to you as of identification. One actually may find home in these other people with whom we share and acknowledge that borderline in which we intersect a shared experience, a new kinship forms through a cultural fabric that is unique to our experience, but also binds us invisibly to like-minded people, ideas and impressions.

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I feel more than comfortable in these environments where the mestizaje can be sensed, where people, rather than trying to reinforce their differences, aim to find commonalities on how we are wired, what moves us in life to bring up the beauty of the fabric. That space allows for new possibilities to emerge, where one can find comfort in this space away from cultural purity. Diaspora becomes this changing, kaleidoscopic lens through which one experiences and sees the world coloured by the multiple experiences in the making.

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ZAINABU JALLO: In this story, you heard how identity and connection can take shape across distance. How did Irene's experiences resonate with your own sense of belonging?