

## 14 Ways to Embrace Your Global Identity

I made a decision earlier this year to embrace my global identity and start using it to my advantage. I'm a Third Culture Kid or TCK — someone who spent his formative years outside of his parents culture so I identify with many cultures (Nigerian, American and British). Some of the most common types of TCKs are missionary kids, army brats, expats, world travelers and diplomatic kids. I happen to fall into the diplomatic kid demographic within the TCK community.

I'll use myself as an example to illustrate the different cultures I connect with. I sound mostly American even though I am completely Nigerian and I wake up early on Saturdays and Sundays to make sure I watch my favorite English Premiership team Manchester United play before Skyping with friends in England or somewhere in Europe or Africa to talk about the results of the game I just watched while simultaneously thinking of the best rosters for Fantasy Football because after all it is the most popular sport in the country I live in now.

Growing up the way I did, it became increasingly clear to me that the diversity in the world is never ending and my passion to learn more about the world has only grown so I developed the following mission statement. *"Use YOUR difference to make a DIFFERENCE."*

Too many of the world's problems are a result of people being afraid of change or not being willing to understand people around them so as I came up with 14 things one can do to understand the world around us or use our differences to make a difference. Essentially different ways to embrace *your* global identity.

1. **Travel, Travel, Travel.** You knew I was going to start with this right? There are many ways you can travel today. For instance, you could go backpacking with friends, sign up for a tour on EF Tours or go to a country you know nothing about and get lost! You'll learn more about people of the world by going to environments you are not familiar with.
2. **Learn how to use Social Media to network.** Selfies and #iwokeuplikethis are only cool for about 15 minutes before the next greatest selfie hits the scene. So instead of

focusing on 15 minutes of social media fame, try connecting with other people. Use those hashtags to start conversations. For example, before I launched my podcast, I spent weeks connecting with other Third Culture Kids by typing the #ThirdCultureKid and #TCK into the search bar on Twitter and inserting myself in conversations happening around these hash tags. As a result of this I made some really cool new friends that live all over. Find a couple of hashtags that align with your passions and go network. Who knows maybe you'll be taking group shots with your new friends as you're launching your newest company or celebrating a victory in your intramural sports league instead of taking your 20th selfie. I should say that I have nothing against selfies but there needs to be a healthy balance of "I" and "we" in today's world. Social Media shouldn't just be a way to keep in touch with friends and family, it can also be a great way to raise awareness about social issues or even raise money for a cause. You could start a Facebook group that educates your friends about an issue that you are passionate about or use that page to tell family and friends why their money will help you achieve whatever goal you want to achieve.

3. **Speaking of intramural sports join a sports league.** Sports forms bonds across cultures like no other. You learn a lot about people and how to work together as a team. Both of which are great ways to learn how to connect with people.
4. **More History, Travel and National Geographic. Less Reality TV.** Pretty self-explanatory. They often say people who forget history are bound to repeat it and I see this everyday. I hear so many ignorant statements everyday and it is because people aren't watching the right things. Spend about 30 minutes to 2 hours a day on any or all of these channels I mentioned above and watch as your mind expands. Reading/watching National Geographic can also help make you a better environmental citizen. You can learn about different ways to help your environment and animals.
5. **Volunteer anywhere.** Helping others can allow you to learn about other people's stories and stories are a great way to learn about other people.
6. **Mentor someone.** A few things can happen here. You teach another individual how to be a better citizen of their community, you can help someone become better at a skill, and you can become a better person by making someone better. Too many "betters" for you not to be doing this right now. By sharing your skill-set with someone else, you are giving your unique self to the world and helping to break the homogenous cycle many people get stuck in.

7. **Be untraditional.** I am allergic to homogenous. In fact, I just sneezed now thinking of it. It's time to break what I call the "supposed to syndrome". That mindset stifles innovation and doesn't allow us to make maximum impact or embrace other cultures. It's not a bad thing to look different from someone or speak another language. It's a beautiful thing so strive to be different and apply other cultures into your everyday life.
8. **Speaking of language, learn a new one.** Can you imagine the new set of people you can talk to and potentially influence just by speaking another language.
9. **Read wide and far.** I talked earlier about having more National Geographic, Travel and History channel in your life. Add books also to that equation. Read everything from the classics to the *Hunger Games*. Everything from nonfiction to fiction. There is no telling what knowledge about the world you can gain just by reading different people's perspectives manifested through protagonists and antagonists.
10. **Read *The Alchemist*.** I'm not done with books just yet. This is probably one of my favorite books of all time. It details the different lessons that young Santiago learns about the world and himself while traveling and seeking his personal legend. You'll see some of the amazing things you can discover by understanding the world.
11. **Go to conferences.** Going to conferences that are dedicated to your passion can help turn you into difference makers because you get to hear from like minded people who could be potential mentors or certain speeches can spark an idea in your head. Earlier this year, I went to a two-day event for Arianna Huffington's book and she made a casual statement about how her kids used to joke about her accent and the idea for my first eBook was sparked and I immediately rebranded my website to what it is now. It occurred to me that there were many people out there like Arianna and me who don't look like how they are supposed to sound or sound like how they are supposed to look and I got to work. Communities, masterminds, and difference making friendships are formed at conferences. Go to at least two a year.
12. **Start a blog.** I believe in using media for good and not allowing media to use us. One way to do this is to start a blog and share your opinion on something. Who knows maybe you'll gain a following and make some more friends. People connect with stories and are influenced by the fact that they are not the only ones going through something where it's good or bad.
13. **Start a podcast.** Speaking of using media for good. Why not podcast. It's essentially radio on demand and you can do it anywhere in the world.

14. **Invest In Yourself.** You can't be a difference maker if you don't put in the time to educate and develop yourself.

As I often say, I want to bring East and West together and have them sit side by side with North and South to trade stories of adventures and experiences they each have had. Now go forth and be world changers! *Use your DIFFERENCE to make a DIFFERENCE.*