



## Welcome Back to Abuja Once Again: How I Became a Citizen of the World

**Carol J. Yee**

New Degree Press (Dec 7, 2020)

Softcover (256pp)

978-1-63676-592-1

*Not just a guide for travel but a guide for living, Welcome Back to Abuja Once Again is a sensible, enjoyable reminder that travel can broaden the mind.*

Carol J. Yee's *Welcome Back to Abuja Once Again* is about all aspects of travel and how it connects people to other cultures and ways of thinking. Yee, who's worked on international development projects in far-flung locations, heads the lively investigation of the ins and outs of going, and living, abroad.

Yee kicks off with a brief overview of her own family history among immigrants who settled in the San Francisco Bay Area. She recaps how she caught the travel bug from her worldly father. She then presents her thesis: flexibility, adaptability, and patience are key for getting the most out of travel, and for learning about the nations one visits. These three virtues were most important for Yee during her time in Afghanistan on agriculture-related projects in 2004 and 2005, as she negotiated being a woman in a place that had much different views about how women should be treated.

While *Welcome Back to Abuja Once Again* concerns travel, its primary focus is cultural absorption: how to make the most of being in a foreign land. Each chapter concerns a particular facet of living in another country, from the subtleties of language to differences in food, religion, and technology. Throughout, personal anecdotes and stories from friends' travels contribute to its wide-ranging look at other nations and their cultures.

The book includes plenty of essential travel advice, as well as a resource section with checklists and tips on everything from making travel reservations to learning about customs. But it's at its best when it gets personal, chronicling Yee and her fellow travelers' experiences. Yee demonstrates how cultures evolve from place to place—how the Chinese characters for “herbal tea” in Hong Kong become “soda pop” in San Francisco, for example. The book also shows that struggles to communicate across barriers can sometimes result in creative solutions. The variety of countries' collective experiences is stressed, with joy to be discovered in how things as everyday as being on time (or not) are viewed depending where you are, or how an American woman with a slight French accent has her own story to tell.

Above all, the book endorses “cultural intelligence”: the ability to be open-minded about what's unfamiliar, and to understand that every culture has its own perspectives. A chapter is devoted to would-be travelers who feel trepidation about leaving home, encouraging them to find local ways to learn about other places, such as experimenting with ethnic restaurants and cooking, participating in cultural activities, checking out books and movies set in specific countries, and taking classes and exchange programs.

Not just a guide for travel but a guide for living, *Welcome Back to Abuja Once Again* is a sensible, enjoyable reminder that travel can broaden the mind. With healthy respect for humanity and individual values, it endorses a global perspective and makes a convincing case for the value of being a citizen of the world.

HO LIN (June 22, 2021)

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