

Living between Worlds

By

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The old saying goes, “Jack of all trades, and master of none.” Global nomads relate. They are pilgrims in many worlds, and feel like they are citizens of none. This isn’t really a new phenomenon. Early men and women of faith experienced some of the same feelings. The writer of Hebrews wrote concerning those in the heavenly Hall of Faith:

“All these faithful ones...saw it all from a distance and welcomed the promises of God. *They agreed that they were no more than foreigners and nomads here on earth.* And obviously people who talk like that are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had meant the country they came from, they would have found a way to go back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland” (Hebrews 11:13-16, *NLT*).

Global nomads live in (at least) three cultural contexts. Hence, they are often called “third culture kids.” John and Ruth Hill Useem came up with the phrase. How do we get the three cultures?

1st Culture	2nd Culture	3rd Culture
Parent’s home culture.	The host culture where the family lived or lives.	Shared lifestyle of the expatriate community becomes the “culture within the culture.”

Global nomads, then, grow up in a “culture within a culture,” living between worlds.

Let me close with a poem taken from *Third Culture Kids: the Experience of Growing up among Worlds*, by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken:

I am

a confusion of cultures.
Uniquely me.
I think this is good
because I can
understand
the traveler, sojourner, foreigner,
the homesickness
that comes.
I think this is also bad
because I cannot
be understood
by the person who has sown and grown in one place.
They know not
the real meaning of homesickness
that hits me now and then.
Sometimes I despair of
understanding them.
I am
an island
and
a United Nations.
Who can recognize either in me
but God?

(Alex Graham James)