

# GUYANA VS NEW YORK: MY CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

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# WHAT MAKES GUYANA A VIBRANT COUNTRY?

There are various regions of Guyana, and each has their own distinct culture. Berbice, the side where my family originated from, is predominantly a countryside, whereas Georgetown- the capital of Guyana is a busy City with more tourist attractions and is more economically developed.

Guyana is known as the land of many waters and unlike the clear bodies of water that can be found in New York, the water in Guyana is brown and murky.

The dialect of the people from the City section in Guyana is different from the way the individuals from the countryside speak.

At one point in time, the homes in the countryside were made up of mostly wood whereas the homes in the City were made of concrete and were more secure.





Map Of Guyana

Capital of Guyana



Traditional Home In Guyana



# ETHNIC DISHES:

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In Guyana, you can find precisely five dominating ethnic groups which consists of Indians, Africans, Amerindians, Portuguese and Chinese. The country is a salad bowl of various cultures that interact composedly with one another.

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Some staple foods in Guyana are various curries, rice, roti, ground provisions, fruits, meat, and seafood.

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Each ethnic group has their own specific variation of food which contributes to making Guyana a diverse place because those foods are shared with people from other cultures people make businesses from their cultural food.

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In Guyana, the Chinese are famous for their tasty fried rice and lo-mien, whereas the Indians are known for their curries and rotis, the Afro-Guyanese ethnic group are known for their cook-up rice and pot-roasted chicken which is an all time favorite of mine.

I grew up eating a lot of different ethnic dishes however due to my culture, I do not consume beef or pork.

# RELIGION & NORMS:

People in Guyana practice mostly Hinduism, Christianity or Islam. 64 percent of the population is Christian, 25 percent Hindu, and 7 percent Muslim.

My family has been practicing Hinduism for many years and we value our religious practice. In my family, hosting a religious service every year is a tradition and norm. During this service, we invite close friends and family to our home, and we prepare the traditional dish that is served at religious functions which is called seven curry.

There are certain norms and values that everyone in Guyana abides by; some of these norms include greeting people when you approach them or when you enter a room as a form of respect, addressing people as either 'uncle' or 'aunty' if they are older, wearing formal clothing and footwear when entering a parliament building, going to temple, church or the mosque, going to the weekly Saturday markets where you can find fresh produce etc.

In the countryside of Guyana, some of the most common norms are, having livestock such as chickens, ducks, cows, horses, goats, sheeps and even pigs in a section of your property.

Reference: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/guyana/>



# COMING TO NEW YORK:

My family and I moved to the United States when I was eight years old.

There were people in the airport that spoke languages that I did not understand and looked different to the people I would normally see in Guyana, and everyone was in a jacket.

The main difference between Guyana and NYC was the weather.

Although NYC was a new place, I quickly began to admire its uniqueness. For instance, I was mind blown by the air trains, the highway, the MTA bus and the streetlights, these were things that I've never seen in Guyana.

A few days later, I began to try the food around the area. Pizza became my favorite from the moment I tried it.

There was a huge difference in the way the food in NYC tasted compared to the food in Guyana and the food in NYC also cost more.



# HOLIDAYS IN NYC VS HOLIDAYS IN GUYANA

The most famous holidays in NYC are the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years.

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-In Guyana, the most celebrated holiday is called Mashramani, people also celebrate Easter, Indian Arrival Day, New Years and Holi.

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## School In Guyana Vs School in NYC



--Growing up my parents made sure that my siblings and I went to school everyday. My parents valued education and that has been passed on to my and siblings and me.

-My mom would prepare fresh roti and some sort of vegetable dish to go along with the roti. On Fridays, we eat only non-meat food reason being that Fridays have always been my family's religious fasting day. After eating breakfast, we would be off to school, either by riding our bikes or being dropped off by a family friend or by my mom.

-In Guyana school ranged from what they call nursery school to grade 6. It was a wooden school, with two floors and roughly about 30 classrooms. In the classrooms the desks and chairs were all made of wood and the teachers wrote on chalkboards. One teacher was assigned for a classroom for the entire year and that teacher taught the various courses to the students.

- We were given recesses throughout the day and during our lunch recess we were allowed to go home and return before classes started again. There were no technology or digital bells, the Principal of the school had a physical bell which she rung for 5 minutes to alert the students that it was time for recess to come to an end.

-In NYC, I was stunned to see big yellow buses that picked students up from their houses and then dropped them off after school was over.

-In NYC schools had a lot of field trips and a lunchroom where breakfast and lunch were served to students everyday. There were short recesses in NYC compared to Guyana and the most embarrassing part about the whole new school experience was my dialect, I started school a few months after we moved and all the students in my class spoke perfect English except for me.



# CULTURE SHOCKS:

In New York, there are stoplights and pedestrian crossings everywhere.

There are restaurants and delis all over NYC which is very convenient.

In NYC LGBTQ is largely supported.

The music that people listened to were not the genres that I listened to, I had to learn about genres such as rap, rock, country music etc.

People in NYC find staring as a sign of disrespect and the people are quite informal.

People walk their dogs in leashes in NYC and pick their poop up right after.

## CULTURE SHOCKS:

Some norms that are present in the society that I find very hard to get accustomed to is the gender norms and sexual orientation norm. Currently, it has come to the point where people within society can identify themselves in various ways. It has been a continuous fight between genders and sexual orientation. I find it difficult to process the various gender identity that exists today because personally I feel as if though it will lead to a ruined future for the generations ahead of us. This may be confusing, but my main point is that 20 years from now or 100 years from now when we die or if we die and only our bones are left behind, we would only be anatomically identified as either male or female. I find that this norm is poisoning the minds of our generation and encouraging kids to normalize anything they want society to be okay with. I support freedom of choice, I couldn't care less about what an individual chooses to identify him or herself as, however when I think about it, I feel like this will forever be a conflict in society. In New York it is normal to identify yourself however you wish to however in countries such as Guyana, Jamaica and various Muslim countries the freedom of identifying yourself as a gender that isn't male, or female is immensely frowned upon.

# CONCLUSION:

- Moving to a new country can be hard for people, especially if they speak a foreign language and have their own tradition, values, and beliefs. When I moved to NYC the hardest part for me was going to school and staying in school all day without being able to go home for lunch or being able to walk around in the school yard like I used to in Guyana. I loved New York because of the food, I was able to get my hand on almost every cuisine also I was able to continue practicing my religion being that there were a few Temples by the area that I lived by. While being in a new environment can be a bittersweet moment, it allows you to realize how much, or how little people can understand one's culture. From my experiences and from working on the paper focusing on discrimination and stereotype against immigrants, I've realized that changing people's actions and mindset is challenging. Although there have been various attempts to help immigrants and protect them from being discriminated against, we see and hear people calling immigrants 'thieves', 'kidnappers' rapists' 'illegal and undocumented' etc. just because they are from a different country.

## REFERENCE:

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