

## *Be home, be well.*

They say home is where the heart is. A home is not a house. For some, it can be. In that case, the walls are made out of love and the faces of those who truly matter to us are its foundations. For others, home takes the shape of a train, a plane, a foreign language, an unknown smell or an unexpected encounter with a stranger, all of which shed light on our own past, present and future. The way we conceive the idea of success is intricately linked to what we call home which is in turn defined by our experiences and the expectations that are assigned to us from the youngest age. Both a privilege and a curse, having an international heritage is increasingly common as freedom of movement becomes more and more widespread worldwide as a general trend. From having an open door to different cultures to feeling pressure to always seek more and sometimes not sharing local cultural references with other kids, Felipe and Sarah handled their similar backgrounds in different ways.

Both grew up in major French cities and left their family to study abroad as soon as the possibility offered itself to them. Looking back at that time of their lives, they explain that decision by an urge that they had always felt to seek more than what was already there. At first, Sarah saw in traveling a way to reconnect with her family heritage. It was also a way to escape out of a place where she came from without feeling like belonging there due to cultural differences and being constantly misunderstood by other kids. Her first adventures abroad in the footsteps of her ancestors were the spark that lit up the fire as she developed a deep passion for exploration across countries.

Looking back at his early move from France to the Netherlands for his bachelor, Felipe believes that he may have over-glorified the idea of going abroad and that his decision was not thought through enough but rather driven by expectations that were put onto him from his youngest age on the basis of his parents' international profiles. He does not however per se believe that this decision was detrimental to his development. In fact, he considers that living abroad brought him a lot, from learning additional languages to acquiring an attractive hiring profile, to developing a good capacity of adaptation and gaining some perspective that helps him look at the big picture when something does not go as planned. Still, moving to another country was a tough process for him as he had to study in a foreign language, increasing the workload of an already demanding engineering programme to the point of having to make major sacrifices in other aspects of his self-development. He also does not believe that being raised with a singular cultural experience would have been any easier per se. What he does believe in is the importance of having a stable and loving environment surrounded by the people that matter the most to him, he who was deprived of it due to the expectations from his relatives to go seek more.

Sarah, on the other hand, feels most comfortable in a context of constant movement. She also argues that being in an international setting lessens the effect that other aspects of her personality have on other people's expectations of her. For example, after working as a host at an international convention in Switzerland, she explains that she felt less of a gender-based imbalance between her and her male colleagues there than anywhere she had worked before. For the future, she hopes and

expects to keep traveling as much as possible with one specific ambition: accumulate experiences in different cultures and areas of the world, thereby understanding more about who she is and desires to become.

In conclusion, Felipe and Sarah's experiences indicate that having an international heritage can be both an obstacle and an asset for the development of a person. Depending on the context, having foreign origins can either be experienced as a source of richness or as a burden in the shape of misleading expectations.