

Name: Delta

Home country: Namibia

Education: Environmental Economics at the University of Helsinki

Moved to Finland: in 2004, but also lived in Finland as a child until she turned 6

Occupation: Works at Finnish Refugee Council

Languages: Oshiwambo, English, Finnish

Intercultural relationship: Delta is married to a Finnish man, they have two kids

"MY PATH": my story before Finland, in Finland, my goals and hopes

Delta was born in Namibia and moved to Finland together with her parents when she was 1,5 years old. However, when she was 6, Delta's family moved back to Namibia leaving only blurry memories about Finland in her head.

Life brought Delta back to Finland after about 20 years. Throughout her life, she felt that some part of her identity connected to her life in Finland was missing. That is why she decided to come to Finland for 2 years to study at university, revive her childhood memories, and return to Namibia. However, life did not go according to her plan. She met her Finnish husband and has been living with him and their kids in Finland for a long time now.

Even after having been living in Finland for many years, Delta still thinks of herself as a Namibian woman. She never applied for a Finnish citizenship, which is partly linked to the fact that being a Finnish person with her skin color is a controversial topic in society

INTERCULTURAL FAMILY/COUPLE

It turned out that Delta and her husband had already met in childhood when they were playing together with other kids. Back then, she did not think of him anything more than one could think of a boy when they are 6 years old. Their families were also in touch but unfortunately their communication tailed off when Delta's family moved back to Namibia.

When she returned to Finland for studies, she contacted them, was invited to her future husband and his family's place and continued visiting them regularly. It was peculiar to see her old little friend, whom she started spending more time with, having become an adult. They enjoyed spending time together, although it took them years to realise they were in love. The couple got married in Namibia because it was important for Delta's culture that the wedding ceremony takes place on the bride's territory.

Delta and her husband have very different personalities. She is sociable, talkative, enjoys getting to know others and being surrounded by people. Her husband has his own way of expressing himself and he likes contemplating in silence after a long day at work. Earlier, the couple would often have arguments because of that. Delta admits that she acted as she was in the right, and the one who needed to be listened to because it was her culture that was not present here. She expected her husband to learn her culture not realising that he did have his own, which he did not necessarily talk about that much but that was present with their family all the time. Afterwards, she became more understanding and adjusted her way of communication, for example, by letting him be silent for some time when he comes home and recharge his batteries.

Delta and her husband also have different approaches towards children's upbringing. Namibian parents usually teach their children to be independent, so that they are capable of taking care of themselves in case of hardships. As a result, she does not do much on her kids' behalf, for example letting them pour a glass of water even if it most likely causes mess on a table. Conversely, Delta's husband adheres to an

opinion that kids have a childhood only once in their life, and sometimes is too kind and caring towards them.

Delta often receives comments from others who say that she is lucky to have a white Finnish husband. For her, it is true to a certain extent, however, she believes that one must really want to be in such a relationship as theirs to be ready to come to a compromise and tolerate some cultural aspects.

Delta's tip № 1: Intercultural relationships, like any other, demand involvement and commitment from both partners. Be ready to discuss your and your partner's views and beliefs if you want to achieve harmony in your family.

FINNISH LANGUAGE

When Delta came to Finland as an adult, she knew Finnish but it was rudimental, meaning she could understand people quite well but could not reply. She also noticed that her Finnish vocabulary was "childish" being the result of leaving Finland at an early age.

To revive her Finnish, Delta put herself in situations when she was surrounded by people who did not speak English. She found a part-time job at a student cafeteria combining it with her studies. The working environment there was very busy and hectic and she needed to reply to her colleagues in Finnish promptly to catch up with the pace. None of her colleagues spoke English to her, as they did not have the time and energy to switch to it from Finnish. The first month there was very tough for Delta, as she often felt stupid speaking slowly. However, in two months, she was able to speak the language.

Delta's family speaks Finnish at home. She has been speaking her native language, Oshiwambo, to the children from the moment they were born but there was not much response. However, as they keep hearing it from their mother daily, they have some passive knowledge.

Delta's tip № 2: Dive into the language by putting yourself in situations where you have no chance of switching to English.

WELL-BEING

When Delta arrived in Finland, the wintry darkness shocked her, although she read and heard about it in advance. It was depressing for her, and every time it got dark, she started feeling lethargic.

Delta says that her connections to people made those winter days better. She believes that having at least 7 flatmates with whom she shared a kitchen was beneficial for her, as she comes from a collective culture and country, and is used to being around people. What other people saw as a downside in sharing an apartment with so many people, turned out to be a huge advantage for Delta.

It took her time and energy to establish contact with her flatmates. Sometimes she did things that she particularly did not enjoy, e.g. going to parties to be closer to those people. Also, by doing things together she managed to get along with her neighbours.

Delta's tip № 3: Having conversations with your flatmates, attending events or even fixing something together at home can help in establishing a connection.