



# Tell Us Your Story

Suzie Cheatham

I was born In Panama City, Panama, of a Panamanian mother and an American father. They came from very different Jewish backgrounds. My father’s family came to the United States in the late 1800’s from Eastern Europe. My mother’s family can be traced back to the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 to the Caribbean, where they resided for hundreds of years.

My paternal grandmother lived in Salem and Boston. She divorced soon after the birth of her second child and opened a women’s dress shop, The Gray Shop, which she ran successfully until joining the Boston stock exchange. We know little about the father, other than he came here via Sweden, where there are still some cousins.

For us holidays were always family affairs. The traditions celebrate depended on which grandparents were visiting. If it was my paternal grandmother, we had things like cabbage and tomato soup and chopped liver; my maternal grandparents, we had plantains, rice and Panamanian meat pie.



When I turned eighteen, I went to a U.S. government office to swear my allegiance to the U.S. and received an official naturalization document. Happily, for me, Panama still sees me as a citizen there. Subsequently, I have also obtained Israeli citizenship where I lived there for 13 years. I am proud of all of these rights and love to think of myself as a citizen of the world.

Photo: Naturalization paper

