

JOSH'S SENEGAL SAGA

CHAPTER TWO: FATIK

A NEW NAME

Nam fio!

I have been in Fatick a little over a month and a half and have had the chance to meet wonderful people and be in the community. As a member of the community, it was important that I receive a name that would enable me to be in solidarity. And so my host family gave me the name Jeg-Jam. Jeg is Serer verb that means “to have”, and Jam is the word for “peace”, so my name literally means to have peace.

Peace is important in Senegalese Culture. It is essential when greeting people to ask if they are in peace and if their families are in peace. It is also important to wish them peace at the end of conversations, whether it's wishing them to have peace the rest of the day and/or peace at night.

I am unsure how my host family (Pictured to the right in the following order. Top: Mamadou and Yonde. Middle: Jeg-Jam (me) Matar and Ndiasse. Low: Sola) picked the name for me, but it seemed unanimous that it is what I should be called. Funny enough, they gave me the name on my birthday, and it is one of the more precious and unique gifts I have received during my time here.



DAY IN THE LIFE

When I received my assignment, I thought I would be in schools every day, or going and helping with youth ministry. I had an attitude of “I’m here to work and have adventure.” How’s that working out?

Well, the answer is yes I do work somewhat. The real work isn't doing things but it's more about being with people. And it has been a struggle adapting that mindset. Reflection on this has really been eye opening. As a United States Citizen, so often my identity feels grounded in what I am doing and not who I am. I don't think it is an uncommon feeling. I think the culture has placed value on what one does and that is how people identify themselves. It's astounding how one's job can determine social status and place in society, and for that reason become so central to one's identity.

In the mornings as I walk to the Church office, I might greet a few people in the market, some of the vendors I've been introduced to. When I get to the church, I'll spend a few minutes going from office to office to greet the people who work at the church and spend a couple of minutes with each one asking how they are, how their families are and even talking about food and the weather.

When I'm at the office I might do a few tasks, like helping organize supplies or cut and paste images from magazines into notebooks for preschool children (Pictured to the right). Other days I'll sit in meetings and travel with my supervisors to different villages. The real work is being present wherever I am. And that doesn't just happen in the office but in everything I do.



On my way home, the shade of the morning is no longer present as the sun is usually at its highest point. I'll occasionally stop under shaded areas and

talk to people as I walk home. Usually discussing how my day is going, how the family is doing, things like that.

Something I have noticed is that it is common to see groups of people sitting in the shade of trees during the day, especially in the afternoon and evening. These small congregations of people will either sit silently enjoying each other's company. Sometimes they might make and drink tea, called ataya. There is a whole tea ceremony in the Senegalese culture. Other times they might discuss news and the events and what's going on in their lives. As I sit with these groups on my walk home I have a chance to practice my Serer, sometimes I'm taught how to say a word or phrase, and other times I am asked how to say something in English.

Sitting outside is part of life here. Every night people are sitting outside enjoying the cool evening air, sometimes we go up to the roof to sit and take in the night sky.

During the weekend, we might sit on the sidewalk after sunset. The weekends and evenings are common times to see groups of children in the streets playing soccer. I had the chance in early October to go watch a soccer match at one of the nearby parks. It is as much a communal event as it is entertainment.

On Wednesdays I have my Serer class from 3:30-5:30. My tutor is amazing and really knowledgeable. Every class is full of laughter, usually because I made some linguistic mistake. It's quite humbling to learn another language in

another country compared to learning another language in School. It makes it easier to laugh at myself and not take myself too seriously.

And the week wouldn't be complete without church. It's a small congregation, I'd say there's maybe 50 or so people every Sunday. But the sound of the church and its choir is so lively and loud that it cancels out the sound of the market. Worship is indeed worship here. The praise is full of heart and passion on a level I've witnessed at retreats and large gatherings. I don't quite know the words to the songs yet, but I'll still hum and sway while people sing. Choir practice is Saturday night and I feel ready to join it.



WHATCH'A READING?

I'm glad you asked. We were assigned the book *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving. In the book, Debby Irving reflects and writes about her experience of learning about racism and privilege from the perspective of a white woman growing up in an upper class family. I personally liked the way she structured the book and how each section and topic builds on and leads into the next topic. Each Chapter ends with discussion questions that make it a good book to read and study in a group or for personal reflection.

Last but not least, I just want to take a moment to continue to thank you all for your support and prayers. Speaking for myself, it means a lot knowing that I have so many loved ones supporting me, and there are no words to express my gratitude. Thank you all so much!

A quick update on fundraising: The ELCA third-party Gift Processing Center had some issues this summer, resulting in delayed or missing gifts.

If you have given a check toward my fundraising goal, please confirm that it has been processed. If it hasn't be processed/cashed, please email me ASAP with the approximate amount and the approximate date the check was sent, and I will forward your information to the ELCA Development Team. Someone will be in touch with you regarding your gift after the Thanksgiving Holiday. You are welcome to place a 'stop' on the check and give a gift via credit/debit card at www.elca.org/give and select my name from the dropdown menu. Or you can call and give a gift by credit/debit card over the phone to 800-638-3522. If you would like to send a check again, I will put you in touch with our ELCA Development Team and they can support you with the next steps and an alternate address. Thank you for your support of my YAGM year and our apologies for the inconvenience

Jam fo Jam (peace and peace),

Jeg-Jam