



PHOTO COURTESY CHRISSIE FAUPEL

Belonging

EVERY DAY students go to the imam’s house to learn about the Koran and the Arabic language. Here tablets are laid down after a long lesson while the students go out to play. In Diakhaba, a small Malinke village in southeastern Senegal, the villagers show me a humble and gentle approach to God. They do their five daily prayers and ask me how I pray. They take care of family, each in their own way, and with a larger concept of family than we seem to have in the States—every person’s welfare belongs to the village. And when tragedy strikes, they remind me that God is big. This, to me, is Islam.

Here, everyone is baptized with a Quranic name. I was named “Fatoumata” when I moved here—after my host mom—and I took the family name “Danfakha.” This was not a forced conversion. I was happy to take a Quranic name and a local last name. It gave me a family to fit into and rendered me no longer an outsider. As the kids in my house are quick to point out, when they put their arm up to mine, “A be kilin.” We are the same.

CHRISSIE FAUPEL

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Senegal

YOU’RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at magazine@nafsa.org.