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heartline productions



Message From the Motherland

The Air Afrique jet began its descent into Dakar Senegal, and my two daughters and I observed the breathtaking view of the approaching African continent. Tears filled my eyes and my spirit soared. I thought, I'm home!

Like many people of African descent, I decided to journey to the Motherland to search for a stronger sense of my identity as a Black woman. And yes, I found what I was seeking. My chest warmed with pride as I drank in the sight of regal, straight-backed women and men gliding in long, flowing boubous through the marketplace in Dakar. I was struck by a renewed sense of spirituality as I watched the Muslims break from work in the middle of the day to pray. And my girls and I were filled with grief and awe as we looked out through the "door of no return"-the infamous slave-trading post on the island of Gore. We recognized the strength that our ancestors must have drawn on to survive.

I believe many of the psychological and emotional wounds we carry as people of African descent come from being torn from our roots and made to endure the brutality of slavery and oppression, But seeing the richness and beauty of African people and culture he
tangible, tenable sense of self-worth and of our place in the world:

Plan to visit the Motherland, especially West Africa, the home of many of our ancestors. The African owned airline Air Afrique [(800) 456-9192] offers some of the best deals.

Immerse yourself in African Culture. Read about Africa, scout out African art auctions or exhibits and listen to music by African artists like Youssou N'Dour.

Practice African rituals. For example, at a wedding I attended in Dakar, family members ate dinner by dipping into the same round platter, symbolizing their unity. You might try serving meals this way. Learn about other rituals in the book *Ritual: Power, Healing and Community* by Som (Penguin/Arkana, \$16.99).

Embrace extended family. In Senegal, young and old live together in family compounds, not miles apart. To keep your kinship ties strong, establish a family day or plan a reunion.

Express your spirituality. Many Senegalese wear prayer beads or pictures of spiritual leaders around their necks as reminders of their connection with the Creator. You might collect spiritual bracelets, figurines, photographs or books.

Affirm your link to the Motherland each day by saying "I am a descendant of strong, beautiful African people, and their spirit lives on in me,"

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