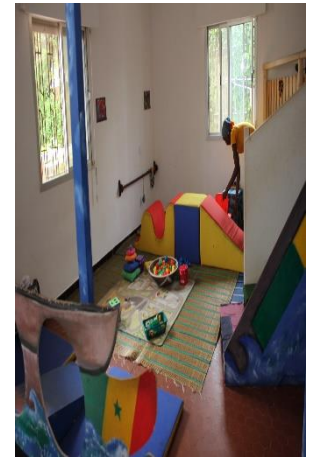




*Karima Grant, Founder
ImaginationAfrica*



*This is Keur Imagination, translation means Imagination House.
This is the actual entranceway to the facility. All artwork inside
and outside was created by students or faculty of the school.*



A play center

Independence Day 2017 ~ African Style July 4, 2017

Being in Africa was not all about fun and games. Don't get me wrong, we had our fun, but we also worked our little hineys off. In fact, while our family and friends were back home in the states celebrating the fourth of July with one another at cookouts and going to see fireworks, the 13 of us were busy bringing in the holiday working.

We started our day with an excursion to ImaginationAfrica, a wonderful educational center founded by Karima Grant with the mission of promoting "critical thinking and transforming how children in Africa perceive themselves and their ability to contribute to development." ImaginationAfrica is located in Yoff, Senegal, a tiny little village community that is nestled in the heart of Dakar. With Director Grant's image of Africa in 2025 centering upon Africa being "powerfully led by young people who can critically think and creatively problem solve," she provides cultural and educational space for children of West Africa and a hub of innovation in the field of learning. Her nomadic learning program aims to reach children and

youth in Dakar and other cities and regions across the country. With such lofty goals and very little financial assistance, Director Grant and her staff are doing an excellent job.

What I found most beneficial about this excursion was the contact and networking partnership that I had made with Mrs. Grant. As author of the text, Sophie and the City, Mrs. Grant briefly shared some aspects of her writing process and how the text came into being. I learned a great deal about Mrs. Grant and from Mrs. Grant. She is an excellent resource for me as an English teacher who focuses on preparing her students to pass the Virginia Writing SOL.

Please note that I must preface this portion of my blog by pointing out these are my observations, without judgment or condensation. What a way to spend Independence Day! I witnessed what I have come to know more and more each day as I spend time here in Senegal. I learned that the people of Senegal are an interesting group of happy people. More importantly, I also learned that the people of Senegal are in fact, a lot like us. We share many commonalities. They have hopes and dreams just as we Americans do. Despite having very little in terms of finances, the Senegalese are driven, intelligent, and competitive—just like many Americans. I also realized that what we foreigners perceive as “poverty” or “lack” according to western society standards, is not necessarily true in the Senegalese culture. The Senegalese people thrive on overcoming what we perceive as a lack. They don’t see this “lack.” It’s a way of life for them and they are perfectly happy with what they have. There’s not fighting and backstabbing to get ahead; there’s very little crime; and the people are happy. As foreigners, we could learn a lot from the Senegalese.



Students and staff are creating a village play center.



Karima and Me