

Meaningful World

The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

www.meaningfulworld.com

E-mail: DrKalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com

4-17 April 2026, Humanitarian Mission to Senegal
Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Lori Henrikson, and Natalia Tomassini

..... “Freedom is not a moment; it’s a journey of becoming.
And Senegal, with its majestic waves, is a nation still rising,
still unlearning while transforming the language of chains,
still teaching the world the sound of resilience, and proclaiming,
Allah ou Akbar! God is great!” ~ Dr. Ani ~

MeaningfulWorld has returned from embarking on a life-changing journey to Dakar, Senegal, providing Humanitarian volunteer assistance that fostered Emotional Intelligence, shared trauma healing tools, empowered traumatized and Mother Earth, & introduced to Transcendental Meditation as part of the **7-step Integrative Healing Model**.

Senegalese tradition is a vibrant mix of West African, Islamic, and French influences, defined by **Teranga** (a Wolof word for hospitality, warmth, and community). Key traditions include communal dining (notably sharing dishes like *Thieboudienne*), intensive daily greeting rituals, vibrant drumming and dance (Sabar), and profound respect for elders.

Independent since 4 April 1060, after 300 years of colonization by France, which left emotional wounds, generational trauma, and horizontal violence. Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853–1927) is the Senegalese spiritual leader often compared to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for his philosophy of nonviolent resistance against French colonialism. As a Sufi saint and founder of the Mouride brotherhood, he emphasized peace, education, and spiritual, rather than military, nonviolent resistance.

Our team impacted 200 people directly, and over 38 thousand indirectly through social media. We delivered 12 programs! One with several ministries: health, social justice, family, and community, 5 programs in universities, 3 NGO’s, 1 meeting with principal of Kenedy School for girls, and a journalists and TV YouTube interview.



Each day we embarked on a transformative journey, commencing with sound and movement healing, meditation and heartfelt hugs that ignited our passion for connection. We then had the privilege of meeting our incredible collaborators and interpreters, each with their unique story to tell. We began with **Katrina**, a bright and ambitious young lady from the US, whose dedication to making a difference is truly inspiring. Next, we met **Mouhamed**, a young man with a burning desire to drive positive change, who showed a remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, having stuttered since the tender age of three after losing his father. We also had the pleasure of connecting with **Anta Ndiaye**, a remarkable individual working tirelessly at the Ministry of Social & Family Affairs, and **Ibrahima Diallo**, who playfully refers to himself as ‘the general.’ He oversees the Center for Renewable Resources, and it is clear he brings both dedication and heart to his work.

As we continued this journey, our focus shifted to healing and supporting our local team members, one who has bravely overcome a hand trauma following an accident, and another who had high levels of anxiety, especially when speaking in public.

Our journey to [Gorée Island](#), was a sad reminder of atrocities caused and created by humans towards their fellow men. We were shocked, sad, and in tears, to witness the small rooms where over 30 slaves were forced to live almost on top of one another without a bathroom, in dark cells without a window, without seeing the daylight, or any light. The **House of Slaves** (*Maison des Esclaves*) and its **Door of No Return** is a museum and memorial to the victims of the [Atlantic slave trade](#) on [Gorée Island](#), 3 km off the coast of the city of [Dakar, Senegal](#). Its museum, which was opened in 1962 is said to memorialize the final exit point of the [slaves](#) from [Africa](#). Conditions in the building were harrowing, with many of the imprisoned perishing before they reached the ships. Captured enslaved Africans were imprisoned in dark, airless cells, and spent days shackled to the floor, their backs against the walls, unable to move. Families were separated both at the House, with men, women, and children being held in separate quarters, as well as after boarding the ships, since most of them were not sent to the same locations. Young girls were held separately from the rest of the imprisoned, being paraded in the courtyard so that the traders and enslavers could choose them for sex.

Our team donated plants of Rosemarie and lavender and with proper permission we were able to donate and place them at the entrance to the [Gorée Island](#), as a reminder that healing must be continued, although the emotional wounds are not visible, while suffering is continued.



Planting healing herbs at entrance of [Gorée Island](#), praying for the souls, & Door of No Return

The local team also took us to see the pride and joy of Senegalese is the Monument (Monument de la Renaissance Africaine) which is a 50-meter (164 ft) tall bronze statue located on Collines des Mamelles in Dakar, Senegal, a powerful symbol of Africa's triumphant spirit. Inaugurated in 2010 to commemorate 50 years of independence, this magnificent structure represents Africa's rebirth, economic growth, and cultural heritage, standing higher than the Statue of Liberty. The statue depicts a family emerging from a mountain, with a man, woman, and child looking out towards the Atlantic Ocean, exuding hope and promise. Situated on a 100-meter-high hill in the Ouakam suburb of Dakar.

Why Senegal you may ask? Mental health challenges in Senegal are primarily characterized by high stigma, limited resources (less than 25 clinical psychologists nationwide addressing 19 million), and the frequent, often exclusive, reliance on traditional or religious healing over professional care. Key issues include untreated depression, anxiety, trauma from socioeconomic crises, epilepsy, and substance abuse, particularly among young men. Data suggests that between 76% and 85% of people with severe mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries like Senegal receive no treatment. In addition to the generational trauma, as well as horizontal trauma.

On day 5 we had the privilege of gathering with esteemed directors of health, Family, Foreign Affairs, Social Welfare Ministries, and a dedicated circle of social workers, all united by a shared passion for creating positive change. And then, a moment of pure serendipity - one of the directors recognized **Seydou Mbengue**, a member of our team, who was his TM Teacher, and the Director of TM center in Senegal -- a rare and beautiful connection, a sense of trust, connection, and shared purpose.

Our US team comprised team leader **Dr. Ani Kalayjian**, team manager, **Lori Henrikson** (Sound & energy healer), and Disabilities diagnostician, **Natalia Tomassini**.

Next, we are in **UCAD**, the largest university in West Africa, where the psychology department, established only 4 years ago, in 2022, is a beacon of hope for a brighter future! The PhD program in the Humanities department is a testament to the university's commitment to academic excellence.



EDEN



UCAD Psychology Dept.



Omar Laye Disabilities

Senegal's psychology sector, though small, is poised for growth, with only 25 psychologists highlighting the significance of the MeaningfulWorld outreach and its potential to bring about transformative change. Our meeting with the psychology faculty was a resounding success, fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding that will pave the way for a productive workshop and future partnerships.

Next, we rose to the challenge of delivering 3 transformative workshops starting in **CERRER**, Center for Research and Renewable Energy, then at **EDEN** an NGO working for Development, Education and Protection of children, working with children, and students, and in the evening a workshop with the university UCAD Psychology Masters students!

Day 8! We kicked off with invigorating Soul-Surfing exercises, meditation, and a nourishing breakfast, where we set our intentions and eagerly await our journey! We facilitated a transformative workshop at OMAR LAYE handicapé, a center for disabilities. We were impressed with **Omar Laye**, the director, who has disabilities as do most of the members. We sponsored 2 girls from that center, Marie Mendy et Khadja Fall. Beautiful souls with biggest and most genuine smiles.

Next, we were utterly inspired by the overwhelming response to our afternoon training at the **ENTSS** School of Social Work, with over 65 enthusiastic participants from the first and second years!

Initially, they were seated quietly, but as Lori introduced sound healing, the atmosphere was electrified! They were radiant with joy, eager to absorb innovative tools for emotional intelligence, 7-step Integrative Healing, Transcendental Meditation, essential oils, and flower remedies!

Natalia was instrumental to lead the survey completions, and overall, the management of our program! The response was incredibly positive, with everyone yearning to become part of the MeaningfulWorld

community! This is the very school where Anta earned her MSW, and she is an outstanding alumna, bringing continuing education back to her alma mater! We began with a bang and ended with a bang! Bravo to the social worker's school. The amazing students were positive and so enthusiastic to participate in our program, even though it ran 2 hours overtime, as no one wanted to leave.



CERRER Center at UCAD Natalia giving certificates Ministries Family, Justice, & Health

On day 11 we were at *Du Sahel University* to work with the students. Students were engaged, animated, and active. They absorbed every word, and every movement. We had a Soul-Surfing session, and all were actively engaged, repeating the positive affirmations loud & with enthusiasm. Then at the *Justice Center*, we were feeling the trauma as it was transmitted vicariously. We shifted & began with energy healing, Reiki, and sound healing. We then shared lots of flower remedies generously donated by FesFlowers.com and essential oils donated by our team. Books, earrings, and refreshments were served in every center. We sponsored two (2) children from this EDEN Center, Isseu Diagne & El hadji Ndoye.



Sponsored Girls Education Omar's Disabilities Center Ministries & Directors

The last day, we spent in closure meetings, reviewing lessons learned, walking on the beach, visiting the Renaissance Mosque, driving around the town of Dakar in the night.

As Lori said "Our two-week journey in Senegal has forever shifted the trajectory of my life. I was deeply moved by the warmth, openness, and beautiful spirit of the people we met. Beyond the work, I found family—gaining a son in Mouhamed ("Muha") and a true partner and dear friend in Anta. These bonds reach far beyond our time there. Now home, I remain devoted to supporting their visions with love and integrity. This is not an ending—it is a radiant beginning."

Natalia reinforced: My trip to Senegal was very enlightening! I saw the progress, potential and many of the challenges facing this developing nation. Senegal was full of surprises and contradictions. All the institutions we encountered were grateful to learn about Trauma Psychology and recognized the need for ongoing support in this area. I am thankful to everyone that made this trip possible and meaningful.



Future Directions:

1. **Continuing education:** We invited everyone to our weekly Zoom support groups, and we continue to share training and healing tools through WhatsApp groups
2. **Sponsorship:** We sponsored 4 children, from Omar's & 2 from EDEN! For the next academic year, 2026-2027. We will continue to assess opportunities for additional sponsorship over time
3. **Coordination:** We will work with our collaborators

Link to our interview: <https://youtu.be/M1TjG2VZ4ik>

Gratitude to our local USA team: Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Natalia Tomassini, Lori Henrikson, Narod Taslaktjian (from Canada), & David Shapiro from Alliance for PTSD Recovery.

Gratitude to our Senegal team: Ibrahima Diallo, Anta Ndiaye, Seydou Mbengue, Mouhamed Gueye, Mamadou Ly, Katrina Brazhnikov, and all others who made this mission a success.

Gratitude to our donors: FesFlowers.com, Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Lori Henrikson, Murat Ogrunc, Hope Jinishian, David Dawud, Alexis Brink, Dr. Marsanico, Hoelzer, & Mary Garcia.

