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Inga Heemink New Deputy Chief of Mission

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From Mauritanian Sahara To The Streets Of New York

The Story Of Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud



Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud Ph.D. is an author, a journalist, and a researcher. He was born in Mauritania but lived in the U.S. for over thirteen years where he earned U.S. citizenship. Dr. Abdel Wedoud is currently taking part in the Globe 2020 project at Simon Fraser University. Before leaving for

the States, he created the first English-language newspaper in Mauritania, Peace Newspaper.

Dr. Abdel Wedoud kindly accepted our request to interview him about his newly published book and other topics.

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New US Sub-Saharan Strategy



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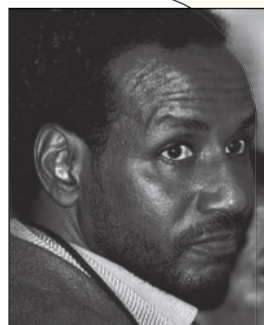
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The Message of OLAN

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Ask An American

What are some of the most widely popular superstitious beliefs in the US and what are the reasons behind them?

Probably the most common superstition in the U.S. is that the number 13 is unlucky. It is so common that hotels, government buildings, and large businesses skip the 13th floor. You go from 12 to 14 as you go up to higher levels. They want to avoid problems where people would not want to have a room or office on that floor. If that happened it would be obviously a problem for the finances there.

Every month has a 13th, of course, but Friday the 13th is considered very unlucky. People think that problems will come. So many will try not to travel or make major decisions on that day—and every year there is always one or more Friday the 13th. (When you look for problems you are sure to find them because there are always plenty around. If you were to look for advantages you would automatically see them also because good things are everywhere—it's just about where and how you look).

There are some theories about why 13 is bad but it is a real mystery. It goes back a long way in history. Lots of things have 12 (months of the year, the numbers on a clock, gods of mythology) so an extra something is suspicious.

An opposite view is getting “a baker’s dozen”. When someone was a good customer of a bakery instead of getting 12 pieces of bread, or 12 cookies, or 12 of something else, they would receive an extra one, equaling “a baker’s dozen” and this now can apply to other products.

Another superstition is when someone sneezes we say “God bless you.” The explanation for that is long ago people thought that a sneeze meant evil spirits came out of you. “Knock on wood” is often said as a way to wish something you want will happen. That also may be about evil spirits. It was said they lived in trees or wood, so if you knocked it would bother them and they would come out.

Then only the good things would happen. Some good luck symbols that superstitious people carry are a rabbit’s foot (not too good for the rabbit, however), a horseshoe—usually a small model, the first dollar they ever earned, a four leaf clover. (This is a small plant that usually has 3 leaves so finding one with 4 is a bonus).

Q2. Why is marrying your cousins illegal and frowned upon in the US?

Biologically marrying someone who is closely related increases the chance that the children will have mental or medical difficulties. Any chance for a family disease is multiplied if both parents carry some DNA that carries that disorder. Neither parent may show signs of a problem but when there is a double measure of the problem in a child the dangers are greater that there will be the development of a serious problem.

Q3. Recently, the American congress raised the topic of LGBTQ+ and the

House of Representatives voted to codify same-sex marriage. Could you clarify the position of the government as well as the American citizens about the issue if same-sex marriage?

Most laws about family and marriage are passed by the states. So for some things, there are 50 different answers. For example, the age to marry used to vary quite a bit. Marrying someone of a different race was allowed in some states and not in others. This was true until 1967. Same-sex marriage gradually became accepted in a few states at a time, beginning in about 2000. It was only accepted in all 50 when the Supreme Court ruled that to prevent someone from choosing who to marry was a violation of equal rights. That was also how marriage between races was adopted in all states. The vote in the House was more symbolic than bringing any change.

Among citizens, there are many who are

enthusiastically in favor, many who are staunchly opposed, and some who are not interested. One frequent view is that it does not affect others who a person marries. A strong belief in individual freedom leads a great many people to support the right to choose a same-sex marriage.

More and more people are learning that gender is not as simple as a woman or man. There are plenty who are very feminine or masculine and countless more who are at every point in between. There are no outward signs or tests that can prove one way or the other. Even levels of hormones vary a great deal. That has been in the news when athletes are tested. The mental and emotional side of a person cannot be measured. There are many instances of little children who feel they are not of the gender that others assign to them. Science has not yet found a way to say for sure how to define a person.

Q4. Why do immigrant children excel in their studies more than US-born children?

The reasons are probably mostly because of their parents. The parents who immigrate are usually much more educated, more highly motivated, and more aware of the importance of education than those who have lived in the U.S. and find the availability of education normal. Foreign-born parents often push their children hard to study more; they do not allow them to play very much or be with friends often or be involved in other activities for long periods of time. Of course, if statistics about the achievements of all children were counted, since most children in the U.S. were born there, there are more successful native-born children, but still, the percentage of foreign-born or children of immigrants who excel is high for their proportion in the society.

Yanick Douyon
English Language Fellow

The Sports Section By Mr. Cheikh Sidi Elmokhtar Mohamed Yeslem

Mauritania Qualifies For Kabaddi World Cup



The national Kabaddi team ranks third in the African Kabaddi Championship. The team, nicknamed Al-Murabitun, secured the 3rd spot after scoring several wins against other African teams in the finals held in Cairo, Egypt. Kabaddi is a contact sport that includes two teams of seven players. It originated in India

and was popularized during the 1936 Berlin Olympics and was introduced in the Indian Olympic Games two years later. However, it is not an Olympic game. With this ranking, Al-Murabitun has secured its place in the upcoming Kabaddi World Cup.

Mauritanian Footballer Harun Al-Rashid Joins Atletico Madrid

Harun Al-Rashid, 19-year-old, joined the Spanish club Atletico Madrid’s reserve squad. Al-Rashid had played for a handful of clubs before Atletico’s reserve team, the latest of which being the Spanish UE Cornellà. The national youth team star will officially play for Atletico’s first team in January next year according to sources. Moreover, Al-Rashid scored 30 goals in Spain Youth League when he played with UE Coronella back in 2020.





New US Sub-Saharan Strategy



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document, despite the Biden administration's claims that the new strategy is not about geopolitical competition, describes the Russian and Chinese activities in the region as "harmful" and hopes the new strategy would result in a US-African summit in Washington this December. The new strategy also focuses on fighting terrorism through military approaches. In addition, it promises to help Africa in dealing with the pandemic's health and economic impact, and the global warming crisis.

Inga Heemink New Deputy Chief of Mission

This past July, Inga Heemink was assigned as the new Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania. Ms. Heemink has long served on assignments abroad including Islamabad, Cape Town, Afghanistan, Addis Ababa, Lisbon, and Luanda. Domestically, she served on the Department of State's Board of Examiners (BEX).



The National assembly grants further power to the High Authority for Press and Broadcasting (HAPA)

On Friday, July 29, the National Assembly approved to pass a proposed bill conferring the Press and Broadcasting High Authority (HAPA) more authority. The legislation stretches out the scope of HAPA's authority to en-

compass all public and private mass media platforms, as well as the management of press and media businesses and persons. over and above that, the bill mandates that the High Authority will branch out from its current five members to a total of nine.

The Association of The Presidents of Regional Councils Votes New President

On Friday, August 5, the Association of The Presidents of Regional Councils convened. Following the meeting, Mr. Fatimatou Abdel Malick, president of the Nouakchott Region, and Mr. Amadou Ba, president of the Gorgol Region, were chosen as the organization's vice president and association president, respectively. The Association's General Assembly was attended on election day by Mohamed Mahfouz Ibrahim Ahmed, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization.



The Message of OLAN

Salimata Ousmane Ba, a young Mauritanian woman, activist, and member of OLAN (Organization for Officialization of National Languages) erupted in the national assembly on July 25, 2022, during the voting meeting for the formalization of Arabic as a national educational language to pass the message of OLAN which is "no to the Arabization of the educational system! No to discrimination and favoritism!" she was mistreated by Mr. Moussa Diop who tried to arrest her to stop her from delivering the message.

On August 03, 2022, OLAN wrote an open letter addressed to the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania Here's the message.

Mr. President of the Republic, by this mis- sive, we, the Organization for Officializa- tion of National Languages (OLAN), draw your attention to the extreme seriousness of certain aspects of the national education framework law.

The fundamental aspect of this law concerns the management of the cultural and linguis- tic heritage of the country.

It is unnecessary to remember that this is an extremely sensitive point. There is no need either to expose in detail what were the consequences of this unequal treatment op- ted by our country since its independence. However, there is nothing more natural for a country at the crossroads of cultures to as- sume its diversity, to formalize it by adopt- ing an egalitarian linguistic policy regime. As is the case in many countries of the world having a linguistic configuration similar to ours. let us cite, for example, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg in order to derive human and economic benefits from which institutionalized multilingualism abounds. On the other hand, enforced unilingualism in a basic multilingual country has always led to conflict and cultural and physical oppression of sections of its population. It is an obvious fact that our state's approach to this issue is aligned with the choice of forced unilingualism on a diverse popula- tion comprising human masses speaking different languages and whose demographic evolution is in fact, non-reducible cultural groups. Thus, the observable mass rela- tionship between the sociolinguistic com- munities of the country does not allow any reduction to a so-called language of cement. This explains why all attempts to Arabize

the country have met with strong resistance for sixty years. Different attempts, some- times constitutional, sometimes reforming the education system.

Since the publication of the presentation note of this law last March, until the vote, OLAN stood up against it, pointing particularly to Article 65 and Appendix. This article is in fact declined in such a way that there are contradictions between the treatment reser- ved for Arabic and that reserved for Pulaar, Sooninke, and Wolof languages. We also detected unequal treatment between Arabic and these languages in terms of the choice of the second language. With regard to the appendix, our main

protests concern the clause on experimen- tation and evaluation as a passage obliged in order to pass the provisions of article 65 concerning Pulaar, Sooninke, and Wolof.

We do not understand why to impose such a condition on a legitimate right.

We also see in it another unequal treatment at a time when Arabic is already a basis of a system that fails every year but no evalua- tion is yet requested about it.

Despite our peaceful protests through press releases and sit-ins, including that of July 25, the day that the law was voted in the National Assembly, the area was repressed by the police in front and inside the National Assembly, but the law has now been passed without taking into account the amendments we had proposed.

We remind you that this law, in its cur- rent form, will produce a great imbalance between sociolinguistic communities in the country. It is not difficult to foresee that in the medium and long term, such an imba- lance will lead to the alienation culture of non-Arab communities in the country.

Taking into consideration this danger and the interest in building a nation united in its diversity, OLAN asks you:

- To suspend the promulgation of the law and to consider all means of correcting its weaknesses.
 - To formalize all the national languages, namely Pulaar, Sooninke, and Wolof.
- Considering your commitment to serving the supreme interest of the nation, we count on your wisdom to build the plural Mauritanian nation.

Prices Increase Dramatically In Mauritania

Mauritania is going through the big- gest price hike of all time. The government blames the phenome- non on the global drama caused by the CO- VID-19 pandemic, which has put the world in crisis.

Recently, the whole population started criti- cizing the government and complaining be- cause of the rising food prices. Some claim that survival has become almost impossible in this country.

In September, the population of Dubai (Tou- jinin, Nouakchott) went on strike which caused a lot of disorder, young men and wo- men came out to demand lower food prices, they burned fires and vandalized. The police were quick to intervene to stop it and they continued to supervise the land for few days to stop the vandalism.

Our team went to the field to see the reaction of citizens during these moments of price rise crises

Dubai is located in TOUJININE, a rural area called TARHEEL DUBAI, this district was among the areas called GAZRA (a non-sub- divided area, where homeless citizens come to stay until the government agrees to give

them the land and provide them with the do- cuments to become owners.) The majority of people who live in GAZRA are poor, with a very low income, in Dubai there is no water, hospitals or health centers and even having electricity is unusual.

These people confirm that they are going through very difficult times. Families are struggling to manage their daily food; it has become very expensive and complicated for them to pay for their meals.

These poor people were struggling to live in normal times, what about these moments of crisis where the price of each product is dou- bled or almost even tripled.

They mentioned that this is the situation of all Mauritanian citizens, and the victims are the majority, those who live in rural areas, in slums and in very poor neighborhoods.

These people expressed to us their hope to benefit from the international aid that they do not stop hearing that the government has received to help people in need but they are very pessimistic and they are afraid that this aid will not be distributed as it should.

By Mohamed Yahya Diallo /English Instructor



From Mauritanian Sahara To The Streets Of New York

The Story Of Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud

By Varha Abd Selam
Professor at Lebanese International
University
M.A. in Mass Communication

Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud Ph.D. is an author, a journalist, and a researcher. He was born in Mauritania but lived in the U.S. for over thirteen years where he earned U.S. citizenship. Dr. Abdel Wedoud is currently taking part in the Globe 2020 project at Simon Fraser University. Before leaving for the States, he created the first English-language newspaper in Mauritania, Peace Newspaper.

Dr. Abdel Wedoud kindly accepted our request to interview him about his newly published book and other topics.

First of all, it's a great pleasure to interview you.

It is my pleasure, too, to talk to you and share some information about myself and other topics of interest, so I want to thank you personally and the entire staff of the Key Newspaper. You are doing a great job as you are working hard to introduce the country to the English-Speaking nations. This English press project is needed more than ever now.

Could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I am a global citizen who happened to study, live, work, and closely interact with people of different nations and geographical locations. I truly see diversity as the "spice of life" as the saying goes. It is now time to rethink the world geographically and culturally in light of the ongoing changes. I work as a lecturer in various universities. My academic interests include Linguistics, intercultural communication, creative writing, scientific research, and global leadership.

You were the founder of the first-ever English-language newspaper in Mauritania, what made you create an English newspaper in a francophone country?

To be accurate, Mauritania is not a French-speaking country, namely that Mauritania is a multicultural society with many dialects and one official language, Arabic. Mauritanian constitution is very clear about this point.

French is the least spoken language in Mauritania. France imposed the French language on the Mauritanian people in the context of European colonialism, and it is time to get rid of it as an outdated colonial legacy.

In terms of education, the French language was left behind globally, so it is time for African countries to free themselves and eliminate French from the languages of instruction in public education.

I see that young people started to finally recognize that English is the language of science and technology. It is simply the language of the world. In my view, Mauritania should switch its national educational system from



A portrait of Mohamed Yahya Abdel Wedoud

French to English exactly like what many African countries have recently done. French people now teach their kids in English at an earlier age and research institutions in France to publish their findings in English as well.

What are some of the difficulties that faced you while coming up with the content and the whole production process?

The beginning was a little bit difficult because I started the project with very limited resources. I had to look for volunteers in various areas to work with me, including graphic design experts with knowledge of Corel-Draw software. I was lucky enough to attract some talented English teachers and recent graduates that have been well-motivated to make difference and contribute to the project. Publishing costs and the newspaper distribution process were among the major difficulties that faced us back then.

We tried at some point to have distribution representatives in the interior regions of the country and with that time we achieved that goal. We were excited to see an English voice in various interior cities where young people try hard to learn English in both formal and informal education. I had to leave Mauritania in 2011 amidst the Arab Spring revolutions. While I was leading the PEACE Newspaper, I was working at the time as News Stringer for CNN International and News Correspondent for Magharebia, a US news agency based in Washington DC. I kept working remotely with PEACE Newspaper staff until 2012, and

then freedom of speech extremely declined in the shade of the rising protests inspired by the Arab Spring. As a result, the National Printing Press (state-owned) suspended the printing of some independent newspapers, including PEACE, citing a shortage of papers, and later doubled prices. The government decided to deliberately limit information to state media. It was a way of cracking down on the free press in the country, so unfortunately that was the end of the newspaper.

How was the newspaper received?

Looking back now, I can say that PEACE Newspaper (2005-2012) achieved many goals in the context of promoting the English press project in Mauritania. PEACE Newspaper was accredited nationally by the Ministry of Communication and internationally recognized by the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, and other important global organizations.

PEACE Newspaper had vital business partnerships in the country, running ads for companies like Mattel, Mauritel, Chinguitel, Top Lait, and others.

On top of that, we had the chance to cover sensitive socio-cultural, and political issues in English for the first time. I am so excited right now to see the KEY Newspapers playing a similar role, promoting the English press project in Mauritania. You will inspire young Mauritians to learn the language of science, technology, and much more to improve their education and sharpen their talents.

Your BA was in American Studies, your master's degree was in Educational sciences and your Ph.D. was in Global Leadership, these are quite disparate fields of study, what was the reason behind this constant shifting in majors?

My educational background is indeed very diverse. I decided to study various majors and knowledge areas to diversify my skills. We are currently witnessing the unprecedented evolution of human knowledge in the context of globalization, so it is becoming necessary to diversify learning processes in general and educational credentials in particular. I usually spare no effort to go back to school to study a new major to reinvent myself. Learning is a never-ending process, so getting a terminal degree in a specific major should not mean that a person should stop there, rather continuous education is an important tool for self-improvement.

You've also done some journalism. You have reported for big news outlets like CNN, what made you become a journalist?

I worked in journalism right after college, and I loved it. I truly found myself in journalism as a job because it gave me the chance to voice the voiceless, addressing important cultural and political issues in Mauritania and worldwide.

I had the chance to start with the local press and later got opportunities to join prominent international media outlets like CNN and others which opened many doors for me to prove myself in the field and obtain more valuable certifications globally, especially in investigative journalism. I attended professional training in many countries including Morocco, Tunisia, and the United States. It was an incredible journey that helped me a lot to grow personally and professionally.

At the same time, I faced enormous challenges especially when I was reporting from Mauritania on sensitive issues like slavery, corruption, and human rights violations in general. I still remember that my most expensive camera was seized by police while I was covering a peaceful protest, demanding justice for rape victims in Nouakchott city.

However, I have very good memories of journalism. As a result, to my achievements, I was granted the United Nations' Reham Al Verra Young Journalist Fellowship Program in 2009. This global program experience opened my eyes to the depth of human rights issues around the world and how effective leadership can make a huge difference in the life of nations, especially the developing nations where people still struggle to gain their basic human rights.

You're a part of project Globe 2020, could you tell us more about it? The project includes over 150 countries, is Mauritania one?

GLOBE 2020 Project stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness. It is a unique large-scale study of cultural practices, leadership ideals, and generalized and interpersonal trust in over 150 countries.



One of my former academic mentors asked me to join the project in December 2019 to help in data collection in North Africa and I was excited to contribute to such a global database. Mauritania was included in the study for the first time, so decision-makers and investors can take advantage of such a database to launch or evaluate business projects.

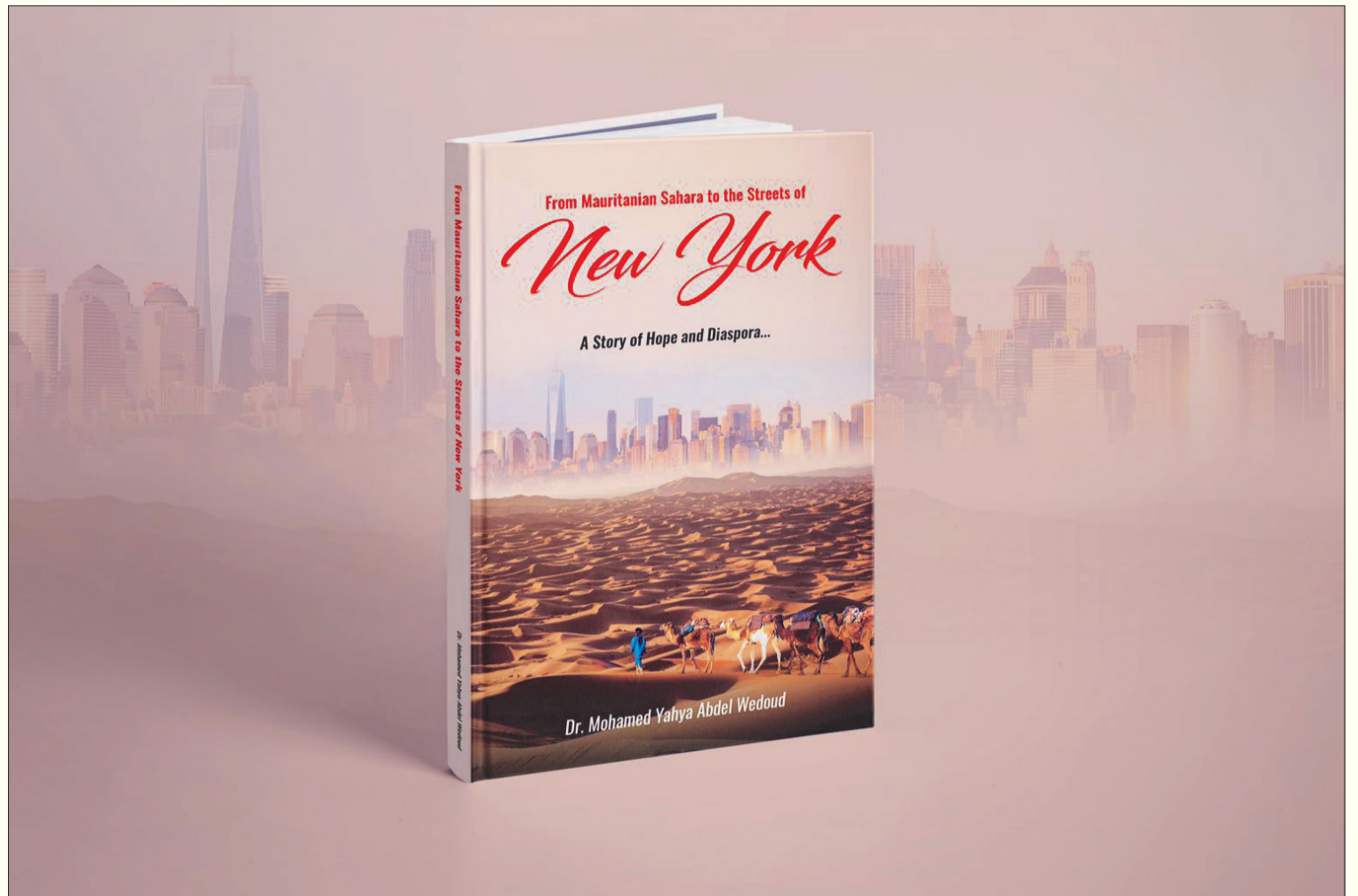
You've been in the states for more than 13 years now, how does that make you feel? Are you more American now than Mauritanian? When was the last time you visited home?

My first years in America were extremely hectic and challenging. I had to work and study at the same time, so I worked in various physical jobs in warehouses and rideshare companies. America is indeed the land of opportunities, but one must work hard to achieve their goals. It is common to see people working two jobs, overtime, and crazy night shifts.

As a global citizen, I will continue to promote mutual understanding among a variety of cultures in the context of diversity. I traveled a lot in this world, and I had the chance to embrace freedom and achieve important goals of mine. I finished my postgraduate studies in the field of Global Leadership and started a career in higher education. I plan to publish as many books as I can in the coming years. On top of that, I plan to visit more countries in the North African region in the context of well-established scientific research projects.

Speaking of immigration, I read your book *From Mauritanian Sahara to The Streets of New York: A Story of Hope and Diaspora*. Congratulations on the publication. Before we get into the book, could you tell us about the writing journey? What inspired you to write this book? Is this book some sort of autobiography? How much of Hamed (the main character) is Mohamed Yahya?

Thank you for reading my book. I am quite



of life that thousands of Mauritanian refugees are going through in America as Sahara migrants. Hamed - the main character of the novel - represents a typical Mauritanian migrant that arrives in America as a refugee.

In fact, the corrupt leaderships of Mauritanian regimes have been pushing thousands of young Mauritians to desperately flee the country, looking for better living conditions. I think that it is time to write and talk about this cruel reality. Younger people represent over 75% of the Mauritanian population, and they should have a free voice to demand better living conditions in their own country, instead of fleeing it in silence. I know that freedom of speech is currently very limited in Mauritania, but people should look for other ways to demand real change.

Hamed tries hard in the book to

have heavy accents and somehow strange body language, some of such immigrants still drink Mauritanian tea as much as they drink too much milk. Milk is known for being the top favorite drink ever for Sahara migrants. Overall, cultural assimilation is one of the biggest questions in the life of immigrants. According to many studies, second and third generations of immigrants are more likely to fully assimilate to the new culture.

Hamed faces an internal conflict between his religious beliefs and the culture around him. How can an immigrant integrate with another culture without compromising personal beliefs and values?

Concepts like personal identity, including religious beliefs and cultural integration, are more complicated than many people might simply think. On top of that, the process of

needed to bring about socio-cultural, economic, and political changes. We all need to encourage critical thinking and call for integrating it into the national educational system. Don't you think you give too much credit to America and Americans? It seems you went above and beyond to overpraise the US. Especially in the domain of human rights, where we see unthreatening black people being shot dead on the spot by police.

Human Rights Watch states many racial injustices committed by the US government, especially during the COVID-19 crisis, where the pandemic hit immigrants and other racial minorities the hardest.

There is no perfect country or perfect history in this world, but there are countries that work hard towards perfection and the United States is one of those countries. The US is not a perfect country, but it is still a good model to follow in many areas. When it comes to race, America is a "melting pot". It is a nation of immigrants with people coming from all over the world.

Concerning the government system, there is an undeniable separation of powers in the US. For example, former President Trump took so many Executive Orders that were overturned by courts in different parts of the country which reflects Checks and Balances in the American judicial system.

Based on my own living experience in the States, I can assure you that the United States is not only leading the world in science and technology but also in freedom and justice. I can assure you that Nobody is above the law in America, and racial minorities and immigrants enjoy their full rights under the American constitution, some incidents may happen here and there, but justice will be served in courts sooner or later.

Thank you very much for accepting this interview, it's been a pleasure.

You are welcome, thank you for your time.

« Mauritania is a traditional country with extremely high rates of illiteracy which impacts the various aspects of life, so constructive criticism is needed to bring about socio-cultural, economic, and political changes. »

sure that you have your own views and perceptions that stem from your own unique perspectives. I strongly believe in the power of writing when it comes to influencing and sharing perceptions. Therefore, and as an immigrant myself, I decided to write about migration and the hardships that face Sahara migrants (in particular) in the United States. This is a very important topic that has not been explored yet. I met hundreds of migrants from all walks of life, and I closely witnessed dramatic stories that should be shared and talked about in the context of advocacy and raising awareness about refugees, so I approached the topic from a novelistic perspective, and I am now working on my second book.

To better respond to your question, it is not an autobiography or anything like that, but a novelistic approach, casting light on the type

assimilate to American culture, he dates many American women, and even drinks alcohol at one point, however, his lifestyle still remains mainly Mauritanian, do you believe that it's impossible to fully assimilate to another culture?

I think that Hamed, the main character of the novel, went through conflicting thoughts in the context of self-reflection. His cultural experiences can be interpreted in so many ways by readers based on their own understanding of the book. I am not sure about the possibility of complete assimilation when it comes to Sahara migrants, because the original culture will likely continue to unconsciously influence personal behaviors and worldview. I know some Mauritians who lived in the US for decades, married Americans, and tried to completely assimilate but failed. They still

cultural integration can be defined in many ways. Personal beliefs and values tend to be significantly influenced by personal experiences and way of life. Immigrants often go through life-changing experiences.

You talk about different societal beliefs in Mauritania, it seems you discredit those beliefs, and, in some instances, it feels like you resented the society for believing in them. Do you hate, well, hate is a strong word, do you resent the Mauritanian society?

I am not sure what you exactly mean by "discrediting beliefs", but I tended to disagree with most of the outdated beliefs. Mauritania is a traditional country with extremely high rates of illiteracy which impacts the various aspects of life, so constructive criticism is



Can Renewable Energies Transform The Mauritanian Economy?

Qualifications: Mauritania is characterized by large amounts of available renewable energy resources, especially solar and wind energy. The International Renewable Energy Agency estimates that these natural resources can produce up to 4000 gigawatts, 400 gigawatts of which can be produced commercially by applying the most cautious climatic parameters.

In fact, these large and high-quality resources are added to the distinguished geographical location, which enables the country to access the global energy markets in a competitive manner, especially the European market, which is moving rapidly towards the growing demand for clean and renewable energies.

Our country is also characterized by a very good complementarity of solar and wind energies, which would significantly reduce the seasonality and volatility of the energy production which is the main constraint of such energy in other countries.

Another feature that our country has, which gives it a comparative advantage in this field, is the lower density of population in the areas characterized by large energy resources, especially the coastal strip from the northern borders of the country to the south of Nouakchott, and this feature becomes essential in large projects for green hydrogen production of, which require tens of square kilometers for wind turbine farms and solar plants that require large unoccupied spaces.

Opportunities offered by the energy transition: Before delving into the opportunities opened by the energy transition, it is important to talk, even a little, about the nature of the energy transition and its inevitable necessity for the global economy. The Paris climate agreement, has set a goal to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement is a landmark in the multilateral climate change process because, for the first time, a binding agreement brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

It is clear that this goal cannot be reached if the world follows the same path that it was walking on, especially in terms of using fossil energy, and here it was necessary for countries and international institutions to move in order to stimulate the economy to exit this path and shift towards new types of energy that guarantee economic growth with a significant reduction in greenhouse gases (GHG).

The studies indicate that the two sectors of industry and transportation account for more than a third of global GHG emissions.

Over the past decade, significant cost reductions in renewable energy have enabled a widespread penetration of power generation by renewable energy, which in turn is enabling the decarbonization of certain specific applications. For example, in cars and light transport batteries are replacing the internal combustion engine. In buildings, high-efficiency electric heat pumps are delivering cleaner and less costly space heating.

The opportunities offered by the energy transition in Mauritania are great if they are exploited well and if the country is well-prepared to ensure that the national economy can benefit from these opportunities. The production of energy from the sun and wind will provide the population with full access to clean and sustainable energy through the production of green hydrogen and its derivatives and its use in the metallurgical industry for a more competitive green metal production.

It must be emphasized here that the produc-



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tion of electricity from sun and wind, although it is widely possible in Mauritania and can be produced at competitive prices, imposes the existence of other solutions that ensure the stability of the electrical network, such as the presence of stations for the production of electricity from gas (Gas To Power GTP) or the existence of storage solutions such as batteries and other methods, which are solutions that must be studied and invested in. It is clear that the presence of gas fields in the country dictates the development of power plants which can accelerate the deployment of renewable electricity solutions.

In addition to the opportunities to produce electricity for the national economy in a sustainable manner and at competitive prices, if the solutions that enable the stability of the electrical network are provided, the production of ammonia, which can be used as an agricultural fertilizer and in the petrochemical industry.

And since the green hydrogen industry depends on water desalination, it can provide large quantities of drinking water for industrial use in the northern regions that are in dire need of water. Here, this industry could be the beginning of a great agricultural and industrial renaissance in areas where energy will be available at low prices.

This industry also provides an opportunity to convert iron into green iron, and enable the production of green pellets and green steel through the use of hydrogen in a Direct Reduction (DR) technology.

Our country, which has large reserves of iron ores, can become one of the first countries to produce green iron and steel which can improve significantly the value of our exports, improve the balance of payment, and the technology of direct miniaturization (DR).

Although the opportunities are countless, as we have presented, the challenges that must be raised to take advantage of these opportunities are numerous and require great and clearheaded work in terms of providing an encouraging climate for investment and training Mauritians to be able to work in the opportunities provided by the energy transition, as it is required to prepare local companies to be able to obtain job opportunities with the companies that will develop these projects, as you can see, the government has been working hard for some time to attract developers who are working on studying and developing ambitious projects to produce green hydrogen. The Government is working to develop a roadmap to develop this sector to improve economic development.

Torture In Mauritania: Between Prevention And Prohibition

Mauritania's acceding to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) on November 17, 2004, has allowed numerous international organizations to present the National Torture Prevention Mechanism (MNP) with reports that often implied multiple violations of the treaty by our country, especially after its declaring anti-terrorism laws. This in turn subjected the national institutions to a lot of embarrassment in the halls of international organizations about what their efforts have achieved in the prevention of torture. This has made Mauritania double its efforts to fill in the gaps on both the legislative and the organizational levels. Thus, the country declared Act No. 033-2015 "against" torture, and later created the National Torture "Prevention" Mechanism. However, what is the terminological difference between these two words, and are they synonyms? Or did the legislators mean by these two terms a specific legal understanding that the audience needs it to be clarified? This article answers these legal questions and shows the purpose behind them.

It is of great importance to state that the creation of the MNP is a contractual benefit due to Mauritania's acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) which required the state parties to quickly create national mechanisms and grant them functional independence. Furthermore, the country must be guided by the principles of secrecy, integrity, non-selectivity, inclusivity, and objectivity. Article 17 (Section 4) states "Each State Party shall maintain, designate or establish, at the latest one year after the entry into force of the present Protocol or of its ratification or accession, one or several independent national preventive mechanisms for the prevention of torture at the domestic level."

And without repeating or presenting the details of the national response to the requirements of the ratification, we must point out here that the essential goal of creating national anti-torture mechanisms is to implement the goals of the OPCAT. This focuses on the prohibition and prevention of torture through visiting every location where there is a deprivation of liberty, including places of imprisonment, detention, reform, rehabilitation, and psychiatric institutions that manage inmates' mental well-being. It guarantees the integrity of the legal procedures, as well as the physical safety, living, and health conditions of the inmates. OPCAT reports about prison visits and to what extent they commit to the relevant international standards. Thus, the MNP is responsible for observational tasks and of inspection, counseling, and estimating the extent of responsiveness of its mission. However, it is not an investigative institution primarily, as it differs from other human rights mechanisms that work in the field of anti-torture. It is concerned with preventive methods.

The Preventive Approach

International and national authorities give OPCAT the right to visit places of detention as it is stated in Article 4: "Each State Party shall allow visits, in accordance with the present Protocol, by the mechanisms."



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The state parties also allow their national mechanisms to regularly examine the treatment of those deprived of their liberty in places of detention.

In general, OPCAT differs from all other international human rights treaties, as it states special preventive procedures. It does not only call for the eradication of the blight of torture through the creation of a preventive system, which is based on periodic and urgent visits to places where people are deprived of their liberty, but it also concerns itself with spreading an anti-torture culture such as cruel and degrading treatment. This is why the protocol had been categorized as the only treaty of human rights that contains preventive powers, whereas neither does its preamble nor any of its 37 articles contain the word "anti". Subsequently, it required in its content that all party states cooperate with the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture in order to improve conditions in prison and detention places and to protect the inmates.

The Combative Approach

Guided by the UNCAT, the Mauritanian law intends to combat torture. UNCAT exists in reality through taking measures that instead result in preventing it. Either through legislative, administrative, judicial, or any other effective measure that would stand in the face of torture which has become according to Act No. 033-2015, "an imprescriptible offense." The same act stresses in its first article that it forbids punishing, torturing, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. In addition, it provides protection and compensation to the victims.

Most importantly, despite the difference in the definitions of the two terms, or the contrast in the legal perspectives through which both terms are looked at, acceding to OPCAT reflects that Mauritania has accepted its obligations to the international community against torture inside its places of detention and imprisonment. Thus, the country is willing to assume additional responsibilities regarding torture prohibition and prevention according to its obligations to the international community.



Regions of America:

The American Caribbean

By Alex DiCenso

The United States is a massive, diverse country spanning the entirety of the North American continent and touching four different seas. Owing to this geographic breadth and the country's rich history, the United States is made up of many unique geographic and cultural regions. For the next few months, I will be writing about the most well-known of these regions here in *The Key*. Each month, I will discuss the geography, history, and culture of one region. This month's focus will be a region of the United States that few are familiar with: the American territories in the Caribbean. These two territories – Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands – are not states, but their combined population of 3.3 million makes them an integral part of the United States.

Geography

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are both archipelagos in the Caribbean Sea. Puerto Rico shares a sea border with the Dominican Republic to the east and the Virgin Islands archipelago to the west. Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic's shared histories and geographic proximity have led to the two entities having similar cultures. The Virgin Islands are an island group divided into three smaller political groups. From east to west, there are the Spanish Virgin Islands (which form part of Puerto Rico), the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the British Virgin Islands. The U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), which are the focus of this article, are composed of three main islands – Saint Croix, Saint John, and Saint Thomas – and 50 smaller islands and cays, which are small, sandy islands that form over coral reefs.

Puerto Rico is covered in tropical forests, with small mountains in the interior. The USVI have a lower elevation and are marked by small hills and sparse tropical vegetation. The rich soil in Puerto Rico's interior is used for a wide variety of agricultural purposes.

Both archipelagos are small in comparison to states on the U.S. mainland and Hawai'i. If Puerto Rico were a state, it would be the third smallest, outranking only Rhode Island and Delaware. The USVI are only slightly larger than the city of Nouakchott in area.

As regards climate, both territories have warm, tropical climates all year round with little variation between seasons. The only seasonal change of note is "hurricane season," which lasts from June to November and brings frequent extreme storms. These hurricanes often bring significant damage to the archipelagos, with significant human and economic costs. Hurricane Maria was a particularly powerful hurricane that struck both Puerto Rico and the USVI in 2017 and left widespread devastation, including the loss of



electrical power for over a year in rural areas.

History

Both territories share a history of non-American colonial rule. Puerto Rico was "discovered" during Christopher Columbus' second journey to the Americas and remained a part of the Spanish Empire for more than 400 years, until 1898. The USVI came to be controlled by Denmark in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. They remained part of the Danish Empire until they were sold to the United States in 1917 for the equivalent of \$622 million in today's dollars.

Puerto Rico was used by the Spanish as a port-of-call for its fleets traveling between the gold-and-silver producing colonies on the American mainland and the Spanish metropole. In order to protect these ships when in the harbor – as well as the local economy that they helped sustain – the Spanish constructed massive fortifications around key ports, such as the capital San Juan, that still stand today. The island's economy and political importance, however, never reached the levels of those seen in other Spanish colonies such as Mexico or Peru. What little agricultural economy was present on the island was reliant to a great extent on slave labor, a fact that is still evident today in Puerto Rico's racially diverse society. Nevertheless, Spain held onto the island for four centuries until the 1890s, when it was forced to turn over Puerto Rico to the United States after losing the Spanish-American War. Despite coming, under American control, however, the island retained its Spanish identity in the form of the Spanish language, architecture, cuisine, and art.

The USVI were taken by the Danish for purely economic reasons. The Danish East India Company, the original founder of the European settlements, settled the islands with slaves brought from Africa to work sugar plantations that originally drove the islands' economy. The sugar cane industry lasted until the mid-19th century, when a series of successful revolts led by slaves from West Africa led to the gradual decline of the islands' economy, to the point that they became a financial burden for the Danish government. Following World War I, Denmark decided to sell the islands to the United States. Unlike in Puerto Rico, however, the cultural influence of Danish control

left little influence on the islands. The main legacy of Danish control is the territory's ethnic makeup, of which more than 75% are descendants of slaves.

Culture

The cultures of both Puerto Rico and the USVI are a diverse mix of native, African, European, and American cultures. Both cultures also differ greatly from the United States. This is especially true in Puerto Rico.

The most distinctive characteristic of Puerto Rican culture which separates it from the regional cultures of the continental United States is the use of the Spanish language. Puerto Rico is the only large political entity in the United States where Spanish is the majority language, and it is used by over 95 percent of the population every day. Many Americans' most common exposure to the use of Spanish in Puerto Rico comes through music. There is a long history of Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican musicians becoming famous in the United States and abroad. These artists include, for example, Ricky Martin, Bad Bunny, and Tito Puente.

Besides Spanish influence, reflections of the island's African and creole histories are also present today. Music and food are two notable examples of this influence. Puerto Rican music, such as the reggaeton genre, often reflects musical and lyrical traditions passed down from enslaved communities on the island. Puerto Rican cuisine is a combination of African, native, and Latin American influences. Many Puerto Rican dishes, for example, are served with or consist of yams, plantains, and/or sweet potatoes, foods traditionally eaten in the regions of West Africa that many slaves hailed from.

The last 125 years of American control have also influenced Puerto Rican culture. Perhaps the most notable example of this is the linguistic phenomenon known as Spanglish. A portmanteau of "Spanish" and "English," Spanglish is primarily spoken by Puerto Ricans living in the United States. As a result of a lack of employment and successive political and natural crises, large numbers of Puerto Ricans moved to the mainland United States, where they formed large communities in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Miami. Today, there are more Puerto Ricans outside of Puerto Rico than

on the island. In these communities, members of the Puerto Rican diaspora often speak Spanglish when they combine English and Spanish, often in the same sentence. An example of a Spanish sentence could be, "Fui a la marketa y parqueé en el parking pero cuando regresé hubo un ticket en mi carro" (I went to the grocery store and parked in the parking lot but when I returned there was a ticket on my car). The words in bold are derived from English and do not exist in formal Spanish.

The culture of the Virgin Islands is primarily influenced by the history of African slavery on the islands. For example, many Virgin Islanders speak Virgin Islands Creole. The language arose from the need for African slaves from different parts of Africa to communicate with one another and the islands' European population. The islands also have a strong connection to the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean. In ad-

dition, American culture has had a much stronger influence on the USVI than on Puerto Rico, a fact which can be seen in areas such as sports, cuisine, and entertainment consumption.

Few Americans, let alone those in other countries, know of the rich and varied histories and cultures of the United States' possession in the Caribbean. Yet both territories represent a unique piece of the dynamic cultural framework that makes up the United States. Despite this, there is frequently intense debate, both on the islands and on the mainland, about what their relationship with the United States should look like going forward. Puerto Rico, for example, has seen successive unsuccessful cycles of political campaigns calling for either succession from the United States or incorporation as a state. Both territories' place in the Union will remain an important question for years to come.

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